



This is a digital copy of a book that was preserved for generations on library shelves before it was carefully scanned by Google as part of a project to make the world's books discoverable online.

It has survived long enough for the copyright to expire and the book to enter the public domain. A public domain book is one that was never subject to copyright or whose legal copyright term has expired. Whether a book is in the public domain may vary country to country. Public domain books are our gateways to the past, representing a wealth of history, culture and knowledge that's often difficult to discover.

Marks, notations and other marginalia present in the original volume will appear in this file - a reminder of this book's long journey from the publisher to a library and finally to you.

Usage guidelines

Google is proud to partner with libraries to digitize public domain materials and make them widely accessible. Public domain books belong to the public and we are merely their custodians. Nevertheless, this work is expensive, so in order to keep providing this resource, we have taken steps to prevent abuse by commercial parties, including placing technical restrictions on automated querying.

We also ask that you:

- + *Make non-commercial use of the files* We designed Google Book Search for use by individuals, and we request that you use these files for personal, non-commercial purposes.
- + *Refrain from automated querying* Do not send automated queries of any sort to Google's system: If you are conducting research on machine translation, optical character recognition or other areas where access to a large amount of text is helpful, please contact us. We encourage the use of public domain materials for these purposes and may be able to help.
- + *Maintain attribution* The Google "watermark" you see on each file is essential for informing people about this project and helping them find additional materials through Google Book Search. Please do not remove it.
- + *Keep it legal* Whatever your use, remember that you are responsible for ensuring that what you are doing is legal. Do not assume that just because we believe a book is in the public domain for users in the United States, that the work is also in the public domain for users in other countries. Whether a book is still in copyright varies from country to country, and we can't offer guidance on whether any specific use of any specific book is allowed. Please do not assume that a book's appearance in Google Book Search means it can be used in any manner anywhere in the world. Copyright infringement liability can be quite severe.

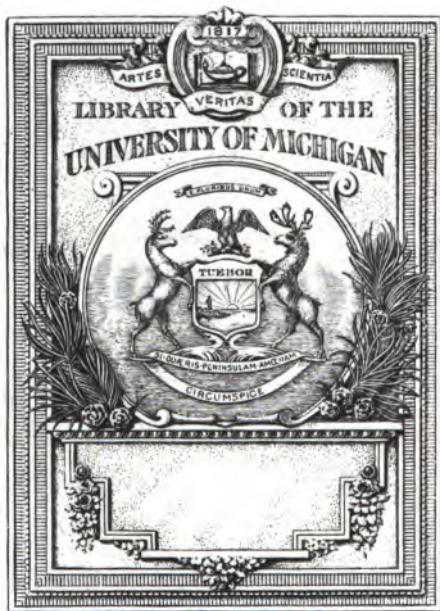
About Google Book Search

Google's mission is to organize the world's information and to make it universally accessible and useful. Google Book Search helps readers discover the world's books while helping authors and publishers reach new audiences. You can search through the full text of this book on the web at <http://books.google.com/>

828

M961c

2.50



C A L L I S T U S;
OR, THE
M A N O F F A S H I O N.
AND
S O P H R O N I U S;
OR, THE
C O U N T R Y G E N T L E M A N.
I N
T H R E E D I A L O G U E S.

By THOMAS MULSO, Esq;

*Monstro quod ipse tibi possis dare : Semita certè
Tranquillæ per virtutem patet unica vitæ.*

JUVENAL. Sat. 10.

*Namque animus impurus, Diis hominibusque infestus,
neque vigiliis, neque quietibus sedari poterat : ita con-
scientia mentem excitam vexabat.*

C. C. SALLUST. Bell. Catilin.

L O N D O N :

Printed for BENJAMIN WHITE, at Horace's Head, in
Fleet-street; and JAMES DODSLEY, in Pall-mall.

MDCCLXVIII.

828

M961c

100

TO

THE RIGHT HONOURABLE,

GEORGE LORD LYTTELTON,

One of the LORDS of his MAJESTY'S
Most Honourable PRIVY COUNCIL,

My LORD,

MANY years have elapsed since
your Lordship did me the honour
to peruse some of my Dialogues,
and to approve them in terms which, if
I had not known the excess of your
candour and good nature, I should have
supposed infallible proofs of their hav-
ing some merit: your Lordship then
thought they might do some good. —
To do all the good I can to my fellow-
creatures I ardently desire: — but your
Lordship, who so long kept all Europe
in impatient expectation of your admir-
able

iv DEDICATION.

able History of King Henry II. and who took such unwearied pains to make it perfect, will not wonder at this delay in one unknown to the world, and with no other recommendation to its favour, than the benevolence of his intention in making this effort : such as it is, I believe the *motive* will induce your Lordship's goodness to patronize it; and to indulge me in this public opportunity of having the honour to profess myself,—with the sincerest respect for the excellence of your character, and the highest admiration of your noble talents,

My LORD,

Your LORDSHIP'S

most obliged,

most obedient,

and most humble servant,

Rathbone-Place,
Feb. 17, 1768.

THOMAS MULSO.



Director's
Hill
11-13-48
64335

TO THE

R E A D E R.

INSTEAD of troubling you with a Preface, I will only beg leave to borrow part of the Apology of an admirable Writer, who certainly stood in no need of it himself.

“ THE same truths may be placed in various views ; and amongst men whose taste and fancy differ so widely, an argument shall seem persuasive, and a remark pertinent to one, which by another is slighted and rejected.

“ THE understandings of men are as the chords of musical instruments : when a string sounds, the strings which are unisons to it, if within proper distance, will vibrate. None then ought to be discouraged, though his abilities be no
“ more

11-13-48

vi TO THE READER.

“ more than common, from appearing in
“ defence of truths in which all are in-
“ terested.

“ SHALL I add yet farther, that such
“ persons deserve something beyond a bare
“ permission to utter their thoughts? When
“ the intention seems upright, and the end
“ proposed is to make men better and
“ wiser, what is not ill executed, should
“ be received with approbation, with good
“ words and good wishes, and small faults
“ and inadvertencies should be candidly
“ excused.”

JORTIN'S Preface to Discourses concerning
the Truth of the Christian Religion.



XXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXX

C A L L I S T U S,

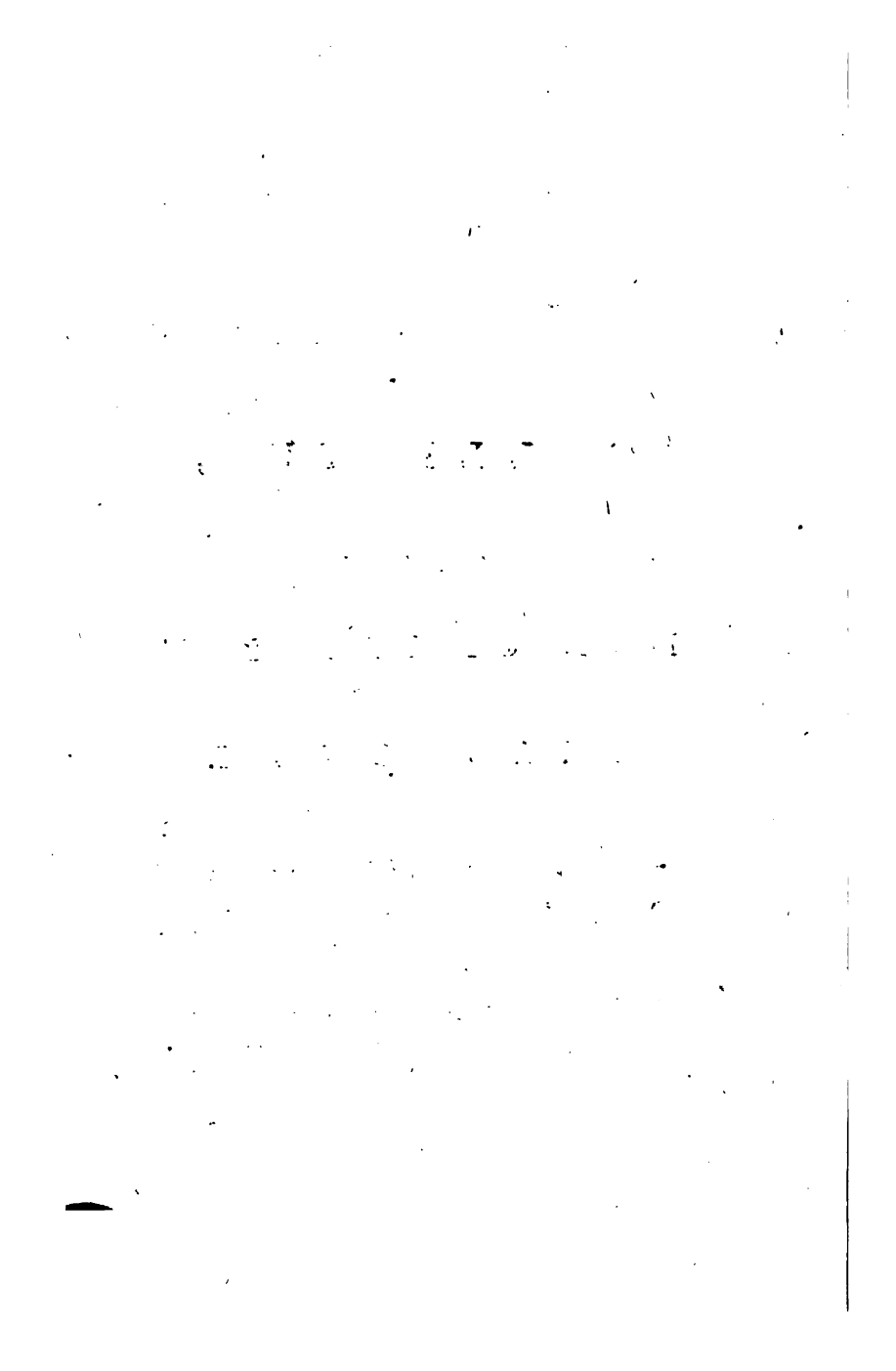
OR, THE

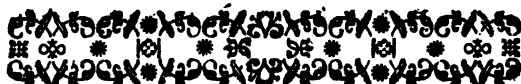
MAN OF FASHION,

D I A L O G U E I.

—— Rubet auditor, cui frigida mens est
Criminibus, tacitâ fudant prœcordia culpâ.
JUVENAL. SAT. I.

XXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXX





DIALOGUE I.

CALLISTUS. SOPHRONIUS.

INTRODUCTION.

TWO young gentlemen whom we will call CALLISTUS and SOPHRONIUS were fellow-collegiates at the University ; where, though their dispositions and characters were not very similar, they soon appeared so agreeable to each other, that a short intimacy produced those cordial sentiments of friendship which young minds are eager to indulge.

IT was no wonder that SOPHRONIUS was charmed with CALLISTUS, for he seemed to have been formed by nature

B

to

2 DIALOGUE I.

to engage all hearts : his person was beautiful, his carriage graceful, his manners gentle and obliging, his temper sprightly ; which with a great deal of wit, rarely at variance with a great deal of good nature, made his conversation universally admired.

SOPHRONIUS had nothing about him striking ; his person was agreeable but not handsome, his manner plain and simple, his understanding solid, but not shining, his temper easy and chearful, but not gay ; in every thing he said and did, he was sure to be approved, though seldom applauded : the consciousness of his own worth inclined him to think advantageously of CALLISTUS's heart for the affection it had entertained for him : CALLISTUS indeed proved that with all his vivacity he wanted not judgment, by distinguishing SOPHRONIUS from all his acquaintance, amongst whom there was none who had so just a title to his esteem.

DIALOGUE I. 3

FOUR years were our young friends much the happier, and better, for their reciprocal affection; for the sprightliness of CALLISTUS enlivened the serious disposition of SOPHRONIUS; whilst the gravity of the latter served to keep that sprightliness within proper bounds.

CALLISTUS was the heir of a family of high rank and fortune; and his father died about this time, contented with the hopes, his son's behaviour gave him reason to indulge, that he would make a proper use of the large estate he was going to leave him.

THIS melancholy event separated the two friends; but they comforted themselves with the prospect of meeting again at LONDON in the winter, whither SOPHRONIUS was soon to repair, in order to prosecute his studies in a profession which his father's successful industry recommended to him.

4 DIALOGUE I.

CALLISTUS has now six thousand pounds a year entirely at his own disposal; and SOPHRONIUS is settled in the Temple; from whence he is often hurried by CALLISTUS, who could not enjoy those amusements to which his fortune, his youth, and the fashion of the times invited him, without a participation with his dear SOPHRONIUS.

Thus passed another year; by which time, SOPHRONIUS, whose appetite for pleasure was not very violent, was almost surfeited with it, when *his* father also died. He now found himself possessed of five hundred pounds a year, and as his desires were moderate, and his inclination led him to other studies, he determined to decline the profession of the law, and enjoy the leisure and retirement of a country life, to which his genius strongly inclined him.

D I A L O G U E I. 5

ONCE more our friends must part; but they parted not with the same severe regret as before: CALLISTUS had now found out many ingenious arts to console himself for the loss of a single friend; and SOPHRONIUS could collect several considerations to induce him to bear the being torn from his society, with some degree of patience; notwithstanding which; he took a sad, and solemn leave of CALLISTUS. Alas! it was a long, a last farewell to *his* CALLISTUS, to that amiable and innocent CALLISTUS whom he had loved at College. Riches, pleasures, admiration, flattery, fashion, and the contagion of that sort of society which his present situation had thrown him into, by degrees got the better of education, conviction, and that sense, that love of virtue, which had formerly warmed his heart with the greatest of delights, with self-satisfaction; and he was now metamorphosed from the agreeable, the amiable, the worthy CALLISTUS to—*the Man of*

6 DIALOGUE I.

Fashion. Time and accident sometimes threw his friend in his way ; but he saw him not now with that joy and exultation with which he used to meet him : conscious that he no longer could demand his esteem, the sight of SOPHRONIUS seemed only to reproach him with what he *bad* been, and what he ought to be ; so that his pride soon taught him to avoid as much as possible that mortification.

SOPHRONIUS observed with extreme concern, both the cause, and effect ; he had endeavoured to remedy the one, by striking at the other ; but he soon found it impossible for his single strength to rescue his unhappy friend from the torrent which hurried him away : he retired therefore with the greatest indignation and aversion from a scene of luxury and debauchery, which he looked upon as the bane of friendship and of virtue.

MANY years had now passed away, during which SOPHRONIUS had had little
or

DIALOGUE I. 7

or no communication with CALLISTUS, when one day he was surprized with a letter, delivered by a servant, in his livery.

THE LETTER WAS AS FOLLOWS :

My dear friend,

INDULGE me in the pleasure of calling you so, though I have no right to expect that you will answer to that appellation—And yet suffer me to act in this one instance as if I thought I had ; it is the last time I shall offend so much against modesty and you, as to demand a favour of you. Hasten to the relief of one who expects you with all the eagerness of a dying man, who has no other comfort left to hope.

Once more I will subscribe myself,
with the most perfect esteem,
most affectionately your

CALLISTUS.

8 DIALOGUE I.

P. S. To shew you the confidence I have in your goodness, I have sent a carriage to convey you to me.

SOPHRONIUS immediately prepared to depart. On his arrival, he found his friend pale and emaciated, with a countenance, the picture of sorrow and despair: the sad sight revived all the tenderness of SOPHRONIUS, and he flew to his embrace with all the ardour of affection he had ever felt for him. They continued locked in each others arms, too much moved to speak, until SOPHRONIUS felt CALLISTUS sinking from him: he immediately conveyed him to the easy chair from whence he was just risen, and placed himself by him,

CALLISTUS soon recovered his shattered spirits, when looking on his friend with anguish in his eyes, he dropped his head, and smote his breast — but presently looking

DIALOGUE I. 9

ing up, with a forced smile, he spoke as follows :

CALLISTUS.

AND are you come my dear good friend ? — What a wretch am I who cannot enjoy this great pleasure without so many painful reflections !

SOPHRONIUS.

DEAR CALLISTUS, use me as your friend ; do not give so much pain to one whose earnest wish is to give you pleasure.

CALLISTUS.

WELL — believe me I am much rejoiced to see you look so well. And how does the amiable URANIA and your children ? How many have you ? are they all healthy and good ? — I am ashamed to ask what I long to know.

SOPHRONIUS.

I THANK you, dear Sir, we are all well ; we live in a good country, the beauty

20 D I A L O G U E I.

ty of which tempts us to use exercise, this carries us into the air, and these with our plain way of living, in general insure to us a good state of health.—But my dear Sir, what is it that has made this alteration in you?

CALLISTUS.

WHAT comforts do you enjoy, which I can never taste! here am I left in the condition you see, to the care of servants who have no real concern for me; or at best, to that of relations who are too much interested in my death to be sincere and cordial in their endeavours to preserve my life.

SOPHRONIUS.

WELL, dear CALLISTUS, you shall no longer complain for want of a tender nurse; if you will accept my best endeavours to take care of, and comfort you, be assured I will not leave you till I see you recovered.

CAL-

DIALOGUE I. 11

CALLISTUS.

O GOOD SOPHRONIUS, think not I would detain you from URANIA and your family—Alas, these friendly offices are now too late!—the dreadful sentence is past, and I expect every hour to suffer the execution—But—oh! with what horrors do I expect it!—Teach me, SOPHRONIUS, to think of death with patience! teach me to expect it without such an agony! This is the service I entreat,—not from your friendship, for I have forfeited all right to that,—but from your goodness, your charity!

SOPHRONIUS.

GOOD GOD! how you shock me! believe me, dear Sir, you may demand every thing from my friendship.—But why do you think with such despondence? What is this distemper—what is this subtle foe which you think can elude the skill of your physicians, and the care of
your

12 D I A L O G U E I

your friend! think better of us, Sir, think better of yourself!

CALLISTUS.

Alas! my physicians have already abandoned me, and all that my friend can do, is to flatter me, and even in that he will fail of success — O Sir, imagine what my condition must be, when even that powerful medicine fails! — My friends had flattered me out of my senses; — but my physicians have now restored them.

SOPHRONIUS,

(in a low voice, but overbear'd.)

ALAS! I fear not!

CALLISTUS.

WHAT says my friend? — O that I could *hope*, what I see you *fear* — it would be happiness to what I feel! — O no Sir, — it is my reason restored, my cool sounder judgment which tells me I must die — Die! ah no! must live — a miserable eternity!

DIALOGUE I. 13

eternity ! O horrible ! speak to me my friend ! now flatter me if you can !

SOPHRONIUS.

GREAT GOD ! what means my friend ? confirm my suspicions, or account for this shocking change ! — Who is it that dares pronounce that sentence ? Who is it that can, but He, that great good Being, who is all mercy and benevolence, who considers the imperfections of our nature, and can look on our failings with compassion and forgiveness !

CALLISTUS.

O SIR, you do nothing : is this all the comfort you can give me ? can you flatter me no better than this ? You should have told me there was no judge in heaven—no account to be given—no retribution to be made—nay, no hereafter—These are the cordials I have been used to, and think you less will raise me ?

SOPHRO-

24 DIALOGUE I.

SOPHRONIUS.

No, CALLISTUS, I know you better ; I know your education and principles, too deeply rooted ever to be eradicated ; I know your good sense too well to doubt of your belief of all these things ; nor can I fear such desperate remedies are wanting ; you are too severe upon yourself ; that Judge to whom we must account for our failings, will consider our temptations ; your form, your fortune, and situation in life must have exposed you to many and great ones ; and though we are undoubtedly capable of resisting them, (or else it would not be required) which of us, in reality, does not often yield to them ? and must we then all perish everlastingly ? you cannot suppose it.

CALLISTUS.

AH Sir ! you judge of me by yourself, and whilst you intend to comfort, you join in condemning me ; you talk of
failings,

DIALOGUE I. 15

failings, to which the best of us are liable, from which there never lived the man who was entirely exempt; but alas! you come not near my case: — crimes, sins, wickedness, and villainy, are here the subjects you must treat of: you must forget that he whom you are to think of, was once worthy to be called the friend of SOPHRONIUS, or you will never be able to comprehend the turpitude, the misery of my case.

SOPHRONIUS.

DEAREST CALLISTUS, do not exalt me thus, by debasing yourself: you forget the difference of the trials we have been exposed to, the difficulties you have had to encounter, and the favourable circumstances which would have made any great failure on my part unpardonable: it pleased heaven to fix my easy station in the humble vale of life, secluded from those incitements to vice to which your lofty situation must expose you: to be content,
was

16 DIALOGUE I.

was almost all my task; and it would have been the height of ingratitude and folly not to have been so, blest as I have been, in all the important circumstances of life. How much more difficult has been your part! Believe me, my friend, six thousand pounds a year, and five hundred, is a difference of great importance, when the merit of our behaviour is to be weighed in an equal balance, and our temptations to be poised against our failings.

CALLISTUS.

HAPPY situation! O blest retirement! nursery of virtue! where only peace of mind and calm contentment are to be found!—But what is all this! mark how I am flattering myself, and injuring you!—but I will mend it. O happy friend! superlative bliss! the fruits of virtue! A quiet conscience, peace within, order and cheerfulness all around you! O happy, because worthy SOPHRONIUS!
who

DIALOGUE I. 17

who have cherished those good inclinations with which heaven blessed your nature; who have diligently cultivated those seeds of virtue and religion, which a good education implanted in your youthful mind; who have with steady resolution fashioned all your actions according to those principles; and who have been therefore blessed by the natural consequences, with health of body, peace of mind, the esteem, respect, admiration, and affection of all who are any way connected with you. Whilst I —

SOPHRONIUS.

Who has been more esteemed, admired and beloved than the amiable CALLISTUS? Believe me, Sir, I never knew any one, of a rank and fortune so exposed to the envy and malignity of mankind, more happy in these respects.

CALLISTUS.

I HAVE indeed met with much of those outward regards, which, when justly applied,

C

plied,

18 D I A L O G U E, I.

plied, must be gratifying ; but, with a consciousness of unworthiness, they are humiliations. But what are the applauses of the many, who are no judges of our merit ! they found me honest in my dealings betwixt man and man ; they found me not niggardly of the good things heaven has so largely blessed me with—shall I say blessed ! — O yes — 'tis I who have perverted them ! — They found me not ill-humoured, or ill-bred, and were therefore ready enough to grant me worth, to which I have not the least pretensions. Sir, hear me out patiently, whilst I confess myself before heaven and you, and then you will no longer wound me with your indulgences.

Y o u may remember, that when first you knew me, in those happy days which we spent together at college ! those days of innocence, of real cheerfulness, and joy of heart — let me interrupt myself a little to indulge the pleasing recollection !

DIALOGUE I. 19

lection! — delightful dream! would thou could'st be recalled! I was the darling of the college; every one admired, praised, and courted me; SOPHRONIUS loved me; and I deserved his love.—And what am I now! — See here this minion! See this wretch! worn out with sickness, overwhelmed with sorrow, loaded with guilt, surrounded with horrors; push'd forward every moment to the brink of destruction—I see it—I feel it—I shudder—I tremble—but I must go on—I cannot live; and oh! — how I dread to die!

SOPHRONIUS.

O CALLISTUS, do not torture me thus!

CALLISTUS.

WELL — I will pursue the cruel task I have imposed upon myself, and you. In those happy days, I was—but why should I tell you what I was, who knew it well,

C 2

for

20 D I A L O G U E I.

for I was then sincere and artless ; I was all that I appeared to be.

SOPHRONIUS.

THEN you was the most amiable of men : with the liveliest gaiety, free from levity ; your generosity ran not into extravagance ; your humanity sunk not into weakness ; your spirit swelled not into presumption and insolence ; you was free in your way of thinking, without being sceptical ; serious in your duties, without being superstitious ; in short, you was deservedly esteemed, beloved and admired by all, and yet preserved a modesty in your deportment, rarely met with, in such circumstances, at your age.

CALLISTUS.

CRUEL, cruel SOPHRONIUS ! — but I beg your pardon ; you meant not to upbraid me : O how is it possible that being what I then was, I should ever have become

D I A L O G U E I. 21

come what I have since been! that I should be the wretch I am! — it is astonishing! — you will not believe me! — O that I could recal that time! — that I could live over my days again! — Execrable wretch, art thou that CALLISTUS! — O that I could live but one year more! — but one poor month! Great God! I shall be snatched away before I have told it! now — now — I am going! — oh! — I am gone — without a hope —

SOPHRONIUS.

Good heaven! his spirits fail him — he faints — CALLISTUS! — oh — he is quite gone! — my friend! CALLISTUS!

CALLISTUS.

HAE! who calls me? what's the matter? — where am I? — who are you, Sir? — SOPHRONIUS? — is it you? I have been ill I believe — be so good to give me some of that cordial — Thank you, good Sir — I am better.

C 3

SOPHRO-

22 D I A L O G U E I

SOPHRONIUS.

THANK GOD !

CALLISTUS.

Sit down my friend —— I am much better ——

SOPHRONIUS.

I AM glad of it !

CALLISTUS.

Now do not interrupt me 'till I have told my shocking tale ; then hold me, save me, 'till you have found some comfort for me, 'till you have given me some glimpse of hope.

SOPHRONIUS.

SOME other time, dear Sir ; do not harass yourself just now.

CALLISTUS.

HUSH ! Where shall I begin ? by what steps shall I lead you to the utmost horror ?

ror? O fatal calamity, to lose one's parents at such an age! to be left without controul, with such opportunities, in such a world! to be master of such a fortune, at two and twenty! I came from college, innocent; I came to this town without a bad inclination; I went to the diversions of it with a blameless curiosity; I drest myself richly because I saw my acquaintance do so. From the calmness of a college life, I found myself in a perpetual crowd and hurry, but it was a hurry of amusements; a crowd of admirers; I found myself flattered by the men, and caressed by the women; I felt myself softened; I grew pleased with their company; I found not that good sense and ingenuity, that feast of soul, which I was used to in the society of my SOPHRONIUS and some other friends at Oxford, but I found something which made me not regret the loss of it: I could bear the frank praises of my old companions, without feeling my heart the worse for them, but a compliment on my person,

24 D I A L O G U E I

son, from a silly woman, filled me with unmanly pride : I became more curious in my dress ; I found a new pleasure at the theatre independent of the stage ; I felt a new rapture at the opera independent of the music ; I met fine eyes that seemed to look at me with pleasure ; I found fine women more inclined to hearken to my wit than to that of Shakespear, and though the instance proved their want of judgment, I was delighted with the flattery. This fatal vanity was the source of all my misery ! There was a time, you know, when I took pleasure in books, but now I soon found myself dissatisfied with them ; books would not flatter me, and I lost all taste for any other enjoyment ; — and oh ! to what mean arts did my insatiable appetite for praise, force me to condescend ! to satisfy it, I daily sacrificed my judgment, my humanity, and my conscience ! I *must* be admired, and in order to it, I must be all that the fools of the gay world admire, and nothing

DIALOGUE I. 25

thing which they do not applaud : to be religious, is to be ridiculed and despised, — I must therefore no longer be religious : here, my dear parents, was the pious work of two and twenty years, at once demolished ! Here, great God, were all the seeds of virtue which thou wert pleased to implant in my nature, stifled and trampled on by vanity ! — not altogether stifled — for now they are revived, to torture me to madness ! — not to be extravagant, was not to be fashionable, I was therefore extravagant ; not to game, is not to be a social creature, and not to game high with the reputation of my fortune, was not to have spirit, I must therefore game high ; I won, I was prouder of this fleeting acquisition, than of all my legal possessions : a new passion seized my soul, I was greedy of this gain ; — I lost — I was disappointed ; I was mortified ; I was enraged ; — I was torn by contending passions.

BUT

28 DIALOGUE I.

I pushed my fortune with equal facility and rapidity ; till at last unlimited indulgence palled my appetite, and there seemed to want more wickedness to give a zest to my pleasures. — Do you know me, SOPHRONIUS ? Do you still acknowledge me for your CALLISTUS ?

SOPHRONIUS.

INDEED, Sir, I can hardly discover CALLISTUS through this cloud of error ; but I live in hopes to see you break thro' it, and recover, if possible, your former lustre.

CALLISTUS.

O NO, Sir, you will soon be no longer able to discover any traces of your friend : hitherto I am still a man ; in the common case of young men with violent passions, strong temptations, and great opportunities ; charity might find out some mitigation of my faults ; flattery might say that I was excusable, if not blameless :
that

DIALOGUE I. 29

that with regard to my gaming, it was a genteel and innocent amusement; that the universal custom of the world, to which every man who lives in it ought to submit, entirely justified it; that as to extravagance, I was guilty of none; that it would be pitiful, nay, almost criminal, in a man of my fortune and expectations, to be less expensive; and then for my gallantries, that youth is the season for love; that in the first of my amours I was rather the seduced than the seducer; and the following instances, considering the circumstances, ought by no means to be called seductions, but rather, mutual, free, and equal engagements for the advancement of each other's pleasure.

Thus I could formerly flatter myself; but the deceit can no longer succeed; sickness will at once discover all sophistry of this kind; this has convinced me beyond the power of disputing, that all the time I spent in gaming was worse than
lost

30 D I A L O G U E I.

lost; — that it directly tends to break the equal temper of our minds; the very essence of our pleasure in it, consisting in rousing and irritating those passions which it ought to be the business of our lives to pacify and subdue: that extravagance (by which I mean spending more than my income) with so large an income was inexcusable; that my expences shewed the height of false taste; that instead of purchasing the exquisite joys of snatching the needy wretch from the fangs of famine; and renewing smiles in every face of anguish around me, I have dissipated my superfluous wealth in the gross and trivial enjoyments of luxury and sensuality; — or rather in the effeminate gratifications of pride and vanity; for these were, in truth, the chief springs even of my sensual extravagancies; — these absurd passions! O how absurd in a wretch like me! in a creature, who is every hour liable to become the poor wretch that I am! — O fool, fool! — where are now

DIALOGUE. I. 31

the foundations of thy vanity? what hast thou now to give a colour to thy pride? — is this the face which drew all eyes upon it? are these the eyes that used to look so gaily and so confidently around in search of admiration? — O pale, haggard countenance, ye hollow, heavy, dead eyes, ye white, trembling lips, thou fallow, livid skin, would ye had ever been so! and O poor strengthless, shapeless legs, upon which I have so often danced with triumphant, insolent conceit, — that ye had been twisted in the womb! — Wretch, wretch! what art thou now? where are thy possessions, thy tenants, and dependants! Call them all around thee; bid them defend thee against insulting death! bid them stand betwixt thee and the throne of justice! — What shall I say? what shall I do! — I cannot *then* die again! O that I were nothing! that I had never been! — O SOPHRONIUS, how can I think of seeing my Almighty Judge! cover me, ye mountains! — crush
me

32 D I A L O G U E I.

me Worlds! — SOPHRONIUS, save me — there they are! look how sadly wild she looks! — see how she shakes her head, and points to her brother — Ay, it was I, miserable wretch that I am! — sweet angel, look not so piteously on me! — Oh, killing, killing! — hark! her mother raves, and howls in raging madness! — how furiously she stares! — see, she rushes towards me! —

SOPHRONIUS.

SIR, what mean you? whom do you speak to? what do you look at?

CALLISTUS.

DON'T you see them? look—he draws his sword! — let him come! — come, injured youth, plunge thy revengeful weapon deep into my heart! and — wouldst thou be merciful — kill my soul! —

SOPHRONIUS.

GOOD GOD! — CALLISTUS! why, dear CALLISTUS, recollect yourself! what is the matter, Sir?

CALLIS-

DIALOGUE I. 33

CALLISTUS.

NOTHING — I beg your pardon. — O come nearer me, dear Sir; — who can bear this! — it consumes me — it destroys me: — I am sorry I sent for you, Sir. — I am very faint and weak — see here (*meaning tears*) they will have their way — I cannot keep them back — do not despise me, good SOPHRONIUS — my spirits are quite exhausted.

SOPHRONIUS.

You see I have no right: — let us not be ashamed of being men! — believe me, my friend, — my heart bleeds for you! — good Sir, drink this.

[*Offering a cordial.*]

CALLISTUS.

THANK you. — You are exceeding good: — God will reward you: — You are *too* good: — you have not spurned me yet, — you called me *friend* just now; that's too much! I must not taste of joy.

D

SOPHRO-

34 D I A L O G U E I.

SOPHRONIUS.

Do not kill me! —

CALLISTUS.

ALAS! how much does your grief add to my own! why should I pain you thus? Leave me, my dear good friend, return to URANIA and your children; — be happy; — and think no more of the wretch, CALLISTUS.

SOPHRONIUS.

UNKIND CALLISTUS, to bid me be happy, and make me thus miserable! Did you bid me leave you? O no, be assured I will not, cannot leave you, whilst I see you thus.

CALLISTUS.

O EVER humane, generous, SOPHRONIUS! — but I will not thank you. — I am better now; come, my dear friend, look up; we have no more time for tears: if

DIALOGUE I. 33

—if you can have the patience, you have much more to hear.

SOPHRONIUS.

O NO, — some other time, — spare yourself and me ; — you must have respite ; — another time I'll hear it all ; — and I have much to say to you ; — tidings of comfort, I hope, to bring you ; — but now — I cannot speak.

GALLISTUS.

AN, Sir, there is no choite of time for me ! And my kind physician, it is in vain to prescribe a remedy, 'till you know the whole of the case ; alas ! I fear you will find mine beyond the reach of your healing art ! But I beg of your goodness and charity to hear me out with patience.

WHERE did I leave off ? — I think I was speaking of gallantry : astonishing assurance ! so to term the debauching innocent minds, the enticing and betraying

D 2

them

36 D I A L O G U E I.

them into guilt, and destroying the peace of families, — I say the qualifying these villanies with the specious term of *galantries*, and speaking of them as indifferent amusements, is such a stretch of impudence and absurdity, as it is wonderful should be suffered : and yet this I did myself, and endured in others : and, as if I had not yet sufficiently broke thro' all the rules of decency and virtue, nor sufficiently trampled on the rights and laws of society, as if I was not already plunged too deep in sin, I aspired to the noble title of ADULTERER ! —

A GENTLEMAN, with whom I intimately conversed, at whose house I was often entertained, nay, whom I called my friend, had been some years married to a most amiable woman : he was a kind, tender husband ; she was a virtuous and obliging wife ; they were mutually blest in each other ; 'till I, like the malignant fiend, envious of their Paradise,

D I A L O G U E I. 37

radise, with base cunning, enticed the lovely Eve to her ruin ; and for a moment's pleasure to myself, destroyed all the happiness and peace of both their lives ! Now curse me, SOPHRONIUS ! — help me to curse this selfish, perfidious, cruel villain ! Where can you now find the shadow of an excuse ? this was no sudden start of passion ! With half the time and pains it cost me to subdue this stubborn virtue, I might have conquered my own passions : had all those cares, that caution, vigilance, and assiduity to please, all those adorations, humiliations, sighs, and prayers, and tears, been offered up to God, I might have been a saint ! I now became a perfect hypocrite : my person and conversation first caught her attention, but nothing could gain her esteem but worth ; alas, how little pretension had I then to it ! and yet whilst I *admired her* goodness, I endeavoured to abuse and undermine it : I recollected all my former virtuous sentiments, only to further

38 DIALOGUE I.

my present wicked purpose : whilst I conversed with her, I was so charmed with her goodness, that sometimes I could fancy that I too was good ; I felt as if I was again CALLISTUS, *your* CALLISTUS : I loved her passionately, and I almost flattered myself, as well as her, that I loved her innocently : but oh ! whilst I would most readily have sacrificed my own life for her safety, I was watching for an opportunity to sacrifice her honour, her peace, and perfection, to my own gratification. What strange contradictions ! my eyes were again opened to the beauty of goodness ; I was delighted, I was softened by its heavenly charms ; and I seemed to be both happier and better for these raptures of admiration ; but it was *her* goodness that I admired ; I again became in love with virtue, but it was in *her* ; and in proportion as my esteem for the beauties of her mind increased, my passion for her personal charms grew more violent ; so
that

that as the one invited me to return to virtue, the other tempted and provoked me to persist in vice : I saw plainly which was the best party, but had not resolution to abandon the worst. I was all war within : I was most miserable ! I was sometimes ready to destroy myself, but I could not quell my passion — ha ! art thou flattering thyself still ? I could not ? — I *would* not — I never resolutely attempted it ; I was a vile slave to my sensual appetites ; I felt the weight of my chains, they galled me, and I fretted under them, but I made no sincere efforts to break them. I was continually harrassed by remorse, and yet I persisted in my impious course : my desires could not have been more importunate, more uneasy to me, than my conscience, why then did I not obey the latter ? Alas ! because, irresolute as I was, the present object seized fastest on my attention ; I could not resolve to sacrifice the bliss I every day promised myself, to the doubtful, distant prospect

40 DIALOGUE I.

of any other happiness; doubtful it seemed to me, not that I then doubted that good men would be happy in a future state, but that I doubted much my resolution to be good : I had so long lived in a course of offences to heaven, that I was conscious it could only be by a sincere repentance, and a thorough reformation, that I could reconcile myself; and sin was become so strong a habit in me, that I feared I had lost the power of reforming or repenting; however, I could not think of attempting it, 'till I had added this one sin more to the black catalogue. What a state! — O SOPHRONIUS, you know not what it is; the *miseries* of the good, are happiness to *our pleasures*! Hope sweetens their bitterest potions; faith enlightens their gloomiest prospects; whilst doubt perpetually distracts our minds; fear casts a damp upon all our joys; and remorse for ever gnaws our hearts. And what was my reward for all this toil of wickedness — these years of slavery to a tyrant

D I A L O G U E . I. 41

tyrant passion ! I had — but I will not vex your ears, nor have I life enough perhaps, to enter into a particular detail of the numberless schemes of villany, the little base arts of cunning, and the thousand, thousand minute circumstances of watchful wickedness, by which I undermined the fondness of this faithful couple, tainted their imaginations with mutual doubts and displeasures, unhinged their principles, corrupted their hearts, and utterly destroyed the happiness of all the remainder of their lives — Oh ! how is it possible I can be saved, when I condemn myself — I detest and abhor myself — and take delight in torturing myself — Why do not you assist me ! have you lost all sense of injuries ? have you no regard to justice ? Come, come, Sir, tear my heart ! rack me, torture me ! — I do not feel enough ! my heart is hardened ! — whip me with iron-rods ! scourge this cruel slave who delighted in mischief — who wrung the heart of innocence ! — O
that

44 D I A L O G U E I.

that I could weep ! — I burst with bitter
sorrow ! —

SOPHRONIUS.

GREAT GOD of heaven, and earth, have
pity on him ! look on his sufferings, mer-
ciful Creator ! accept his severe contri-
tion !

CALLISTUS.

Amen—amen ! — ay, now they gush
— are they not blood, SOPHRONIUS ? —
weep heart, as well as eyes ! — O thou
supreme, thou righteous — I dare not
pray—Oh ! how should I lift up my eyes
to him who knows my heart ! base, cruel,
selfish heart ! — burst — burst ! —

SOPHRONIUS.

WEEP on, poor CALLISTUS ! thou must
suffer ! and heaven knows how much I
suffer with thee ! pour out thy contrite
soul in penitential sorrow ; but in the
midst of thy deep distress, remember
hope ;

DIALOGUE I 43

hope; for God, in the midst of justice, will remember mercy.

CALLISTUS.

O, SIR, speak on of sorrow—bitterest sorrow, — distress, and unutterable anguish, but talk not yet of mercy, for alas! you will only flatter me; you know not yet half my guilt.

SOPHRONIUS.

GOOD GOD, is there more to come? is there any thing worse?

CALLISTUS.

AY, SIR, there is, much more, and therefore worse! I can speak now, and will snatch the opportunity to go on.

AFTER all this tedious preparation, after I had alienated her love from her husband, and secured it to myself——ah, poor LUCINDA, what a change! — After I had taken all these pains to work
her

44 D I A L O G U E I.

her to my purpose, I found myself still unlikely to gain it : she frankly confessed she loved me, but still stopped my mouth with indignation, whenever I attempted to insinuate the completion of my wishes. Think how I raged with impatience and disappointment — I began to fear that all my long laboured schemes would be frustrated ; that after I had incurred all the guilt, I should reap no fruit from it ; when one night that my injured friend was out of town, I persuaded her to go to the Masquerade ; there I exerted all my arts of pleasing, of deluding, of corrupting ; but, as I had long experienced the weakness of their power on this obstinate virtue, I prevailed on her at different times, and by various arguments, to drink several glasses of Champagne, which operated to my wish : her blood inflamed, her imagination heated, her mind softened, and her conscience lulled asleep, I conveyed her to a place commodious for my purpose, and there,
like

like a base, cruel assassin, destroyed her virtue whilst it slumbered : but, oh, SOPHRONIUS, with what terrors did it wake ! all her guilt, like a hideous spectre, glared before her eyes ; her soul was overcome with confusion and terror ; she sunk into a long swoon ; — I knew not whether she would ever recover from it ; — a thousand dreadful consequences crowded to my imagination ; — astonishment, compassion, fear, shame, remorse and horror, shook my whole frame ; — my knees smote one against the other, a cold dew hung upon my forehead, and I would have given the whole world, to have recalled one hour. — At length she was restored — to what ? — shall I say to life ! Alas ! she has ever since been dying ! — O, Sir ! think what a mind, unused to wilful sin, must feel, that finds itself suddenly plunged so deep in guilt ! — but surely her sorrow and contrition were still deeper ! — For some time, she seemed to be in a manner stupefied ;

46 D I A L O G U E I.

fied ; a dreadful calm held her soul in suspense ; she looked up at me with a peaceful, unthinking countenance ; she held out her beautiful hand to me, which mine trembled as it received ; I stood in that state of fearful expectation which those unhappy mortals feel, who know, by a certain stillness of all nature, that an earthquake must succeed : she looked round the room with an emotion of surprise, as not recollecting where she was ; then she turned to me again, with meek enquiring eyes ; — I could not speak — my very soul was chilled, my tongue was frozen : I looked, I doubt not, like the guilty robber when brought before Justice to confront his accuser : — She seemed to wonder at my countenance, and my silence, when sudden recollection lighted up her eyes with all the rage of all the passions ; — her brain seemed to boil with the heat of her imagination ; her heart beat with astonishing fury ; — now was the dreadful earthquake ! her bosom

worked with violent convulsive heavings ; I dreaded every moment her falling into more dangerous fits, for she could not weep ; so that I trembled, lest the furious conflict within, finding no vent, should suddenly destroy her : I threw myself at her feet, and with all the moving gestures, tender looks, and softening expressions I could devise, endeavoured to melt her into tears ; I succeeded at last, and then had reason to fear that she would have been stifled with the raging torrent : I believe it was an hour before she was in any degree composed ; in all which time she never spoke three words, nor hardly looked on me ; her eyes were sometimes fixed upon the floor, and sometimes cast up to heaven, with a look of such unutterable anguish, as wrung my heart. At last the fountain of her tears dried up, the storm of passion subsided by degrees, and she sunk into a fixt thoughtfulness for some time ; then, with an air of resolution.

48 DIALOGUE I.

lution and dignity, she desired me, in a manner which commanded my obedience, to find her some method of conveyance home : I put her into a chair, with the conscious meanness of a beaten slave, and she left me to enjoy my triumph. How I enjoyed it ! I was distracted ! — I feared from her manner, I had nothing further to expect, and yet my wishes were no less eager ; — see how they were satisfied — This was the assignation I received next day.

SIR,

THINK not I am going to reproach you ; — no, I am sensible I have no right to do it : I am too deeply plunged in guilt myself, to presume to upbraid another ; my only end in this, is to conjure you, as you are a gentleman, to be careful of my reputation ; the loss of which only is wanting to complete my misery. I beseech you by — your love, I was go-

D I A L O G U E I. 49

ing to say, but I have no reason to think *that* is any motive with you to do me good—and to adjure you by that sacred power, which I have so lately offended, suits neither your condition, nor my own : — Alas ! I have nothing left whereby to move you, but my deep distress ! — by these tears then, by these scalding tears, which blot the writing, I implore you, let not any act or word of inconsideration, impatience, or resentment escape you, that may give a suspicion of our fatal secret, when I solemnly, and most resolutely declare, as I hope for forgiveness of my past sins, and particularly this last, great, foul one, that I never will repeat it. The remainder of my wretched days must be devoted to sorrow and severe repentance ; would to heaven you may be disposed to dedicate your own to the same purposes ! O that we may meet, through the mercy of God, hereafter, in a better state, freed from that shame and confusion which must for ever ac-

E

company

50 D I A L O G U E I.

company the sight of each other here ! Spare me that mortification as much as possible, without making the sudden interruption of our acquaintance remarkable.

How happy I have been ! — it is all passed ! — O peace and ease, O health of mind and body, O chearful innocence, farewell ! — Come and learn of me to sigh and weep, but do not interrupt my solemn sorrows — do not disturb the sacred moments of a dying wretch ; but, since you have utterly destroyed the happiness of my present state of existence, help me to escape perfect misery in the next, and pray for the desolate

LUCINDA.

THIS was my reward ! here was the transient heaven, to the attainment of which I had so long dedicated all my powers, changed in a moment to a perfect hell ! Vexation, rage, and remorse,
rent

D I A L O G U E I. 51

rent my soul ! I imprecated vengeance on myself ! Sometimes I cursed the world, and even poor LUCINDA — then, at the thought of her affliction, wept like a beaten child. O glorious state ! what comfort have the wicked ? what had I to sooth my anguish ! Life was a cruel torment to me, and I dared not die ! The grave could promise *me* no refuge from pain ! I had no hope ! — I have none now ! now I *must* die — down, down, thou cursed heart, and do not choak me ! — I flattered myself I could fly from despair ; I resolved to change the scene, and go abroad. I went to LUCINDA to take my leave ; I was told she was ill, and confined to her bed : alas ! she has never been well since ; her constitution, as well as her spirit, is broken : her husband suspects not the cause of all her miseries, but is miserable himself by sympathy with her ; for after my fatal design had disclosed itself, she soon re-traced my wiles, penetrated the whole

52 D I A L O G U E I .

scheme of my villany, and recovered her husband's affection, by her redoubled tenderness, and attention to him; Since my return from abroad, I have heard that they live entirely in the country, where she employs all her time and powers in acts of piety and charity; and though her health continually decays; has, in a great measure, recovered her serenity, and chearfulness of temper. O that I had acted like her! perhaps, instead of suffering thus, I too might now have smiled in peace!

SOPHRONEUS.

O, my friend, it is never too late; the gates of mercy are ever open to receive the penitent; our gracious God desires not the death of a sinner; but whenever he shall turn from his wickedness, sincerely repent of his past offences, and stedfastly resolve to lead a new life, has promised, for the sake of our blessed Redeemer, to save his soul alive.

CALLIS-

DIALOGUE I. 53

CALLISTUS.

HOLD, hold, SOPHRONIUS, you torture me to madness! what have I to do with that Redeemer? He is no Saviour to me! Will he mediate for me, who have disavowed him, ridiculed, and reviled him?

SOPHRONIUS.

Alas! alas!

CALLISTUS.

Ay, Sir, alas, indeed! now your sheet anchor's gone — O, horror! there they are again! they beckon me away! — O, no, not yet — I will not, cannot come — I have not told it yet — O spare me yet a day, an hour! Save me — save me! mercy! mercy! — Save me, great God! — So! — SOPHRONIUS? are you there? O, I am glad to see you! give me your hand — O, coward guilt!

E 3

SOPHRO-

SOPHRONIUS.

GREAT GOD — what is it, Sir ? this is the second time you have amazed me thus !

CALLISTUS.

IT is so — I am sorry for it — but there is no end of the torments of a mind like mine ! — O for a day, an hour of peace and ease ! — never, never more must I taste them for a moment.

SOPHRONIUS.

O CALLISTUS — O my friend ! — nothing but *your* sorrow can equal mine ! — it *will* avail ! heaven can have no more ; demands no more.

O GRACIOUS Being, essence of goodness ! vouchsafe to cast an eye of pity on thy disconsolate creatures ! — See our eyes streaming with tears ! — our hearts melting with fervent sorrow ! — poor
worthless

D I A L O G U E I. 55

worthless creatures as we are, we can make no other satisfaction for all the offences we commit against thy Divine Majesty ! — O do not disdain his broken contrite spirit !

CALLISTUS.

LET *me* join — I cannot speak — hear him — hear thy faithful servant — see me humbled to the dust — pity — spare me — save me — have mercy on a miserable wretch — *Can* it be, consistent with thy justice ! — it cannot be ! — O SOPHRONIUS, it *cannot* be ! — After all this remorse, — after all these warnings, — these calls to repentance, I persisted in my course of wickedness : I fled from misery, but I fled *not* from sin : fool that I was, I wanted to avoid the effect, yet attempted not to remove the cause : I changed my climate, but my mind was still the same : in vain did the undistinguishing sun shine upon

56 D I A L O G U E I.

me with more unclouded brightness, all was still black, and gloomy within : in vain did I mix in the liveliest companies of the sprightliest nation ; I forced a smile upon my face, whilst, in the bitterness of my soul, I cursed myself, — And what, think you, was the desperate remedy I at last applied to for relief ? that stupefying opiate of the Soul, which sheaths the edge of fear, and destroys the warmth of hope ! I listened with eagerness to all who opposed and ridiculed religion ; I embraced the hardy man, who denied there was a God — Yes, I *hoped* to be convinced that there was no governor of the universe ; — and that all that I had believed 'till now, was prejudice and childish superstition : and what was the fruit of this noble freedom ? why to flatter myself that Reason alone was to be our guide and judge ; that there was no future tribunal ; — that there was no hereafter : — yes, SOPHRO-
NUS, I would have persuaded myself, that

D I A L O G U E I. 57

that this vile world was *all* ; and rather than become good, I chose to become *nothing*. — O noble expedient ! O glorious stratagem ! to sculk into the grave ; to sleep for ever in the dust ; to be lost in annihilation ! — Now I had recovered some hopes of ease ; I had now a new prospect of peace ; at the worst, I could fly to the hospitable arms of death ; there, no wretch is denied an asylum ; whenever I was weary of the load of life, here I could lay it down, and take my rest for ever, — Why did I not then seize this refuge ? I was not happy ; I was not satisfied with my present situation ; — but, O ! I *feared* to change it ! — my new hopes were false ; I felt they were so ; and dared not to rely upon them : well might I say, I *flattered* myself ; I did not, I could not believe the absurdities which I would fain have introduced into the place of my former principles ; but my mind refused to submit to the ignominious change : however,

58 DIALOGUE I.

ever, I hung as it were in a pleasing suspense ; pleasing, I mean, in comparison with my late situation ; but far, very far from pleasant : I had amused my soul with vain phantoms of hope, staggered my reason with imaginary difficulties, and lulled my conscience into a delusive stupidity ; but sickness has awakened it ; more powerful disease has broke the enchantment of scepticism, and dispelled the clouds it had raised around me : O poor defence against the piercing rays of truth, which now, at the approach of death, rush upon my sight, and discover to my trembling soul, unbounded prospects of inevitable life : O, SOPHRONIUS, those prospects which to you are so glorious, to me are gloomy and horrible ! — Why were not my eyes opened before I completed my ruin ! before I entered upon that dreadful scene, which will make you fly me ! Yes, you will leave me, SOPHRONIUS, you will abandon me to my dreadful fate ; shun
me

DIALOGUE I. 59

me as a hideous fiend ; before I have concluded this last part of my shocking narration.

SOPHRONIUS.

INDEED I will not leave you ; what, shall I be severe against you, who are so severe upon yourself ? Shall I condemn you, who have myself so much need of forgiveness ? Shall I be unmoved by your piercing sorrows, when I trust in the mercy of God — confidently trust — that *he* will have compassion on them ? — Yes, CALLISTUS, this is sincere repentance, and sure it will be accepted. But, my dearest friend, let me beseech you to have pity on yourself ; you must have respite ; you shall not thus exhaust your spirits ; this is the only thing in which I will oppose you, but I will hear no more at present.

CALLISTUS.

ALAS, my friend, I forgot that you have had no refreshment since your journey.

66 D I A L O G U E I.

Forgive my inattention. — Come, I think I will try to shift the scene; with your help I will leave this sad apartment. — My kind comforter, you are my only support!

SOPHRONIUS,

GENTLY, dear Sir. —

D I A L O G U E

DIALOGUE II.

CALLISTUS. SOPHRONIUS.

[This conversation pass on the day after the former. — SOPHRONIUS is entering the chamber of CALLISTUS, — the first time he had seen him that day.]

CALLISTUS.

IS it SOPHRONIUS? it is my excellent friend. May every day shine on you as bright as this! may health and happiness for ever attend you! may celestial glories reward your goodness.

SOPHRONIUS.

How does my dear CALLISTUS? how do you find yourself to day? I think I may pronounce you better than when first I saw you.

CALLIS-

62 DIALOGUE II.

CALLISTUS.

I *live* SOPHRONIUS ; I see the sun again ; and what is a more welcome sight, I see my SOPHRONIUS once again ; I grasp his honest hand ; I view his benevolent countenance ; I hear his comfortable voice ; once more I taste of pleasure.

SOPHRONIUS.

AND like a faithful friend, immediately communicate a large share to me. Believe me, dearest Sir, I hardly ever knew a greater pleasure than to hear you speak thus cheerfully.

CALLISTUS.

You ever make your own happiness ; it grows out of your goodness. Your kindness has done more for me than the skill of my physicians, you have prolonged my life a day at least ; you have given a recruit of spirits to my languid blood ; you have spoken comfort to my trembling soul.

SOPHRO-

DIALOGUE II. 63

SOPHRONIUS.

HAPPY am I to have been made the instrument of any good to my CALLISTUS.

CALLISTUS.

The Instrument? think you that I dare look higher than yourself for blessings? O no, SOPHRONIUS, I cannot hope for favour from any being superior to yourself; but you are indulgent to me, even to a weakness; you forget your own dignity whilst you smile on me.— Well, I beg your pardon, I see I pain your modest heart. But come, if you wish me to prolong this interval of ease, this glimpse of joy, preserve me from myself; divert my thoughts on you again. You have breakfasted I hope.

SOPHRONIUS.

Yes, Sir; I knew you would be displeased if I stayed for you.

CALLIS-

64 DIALOGUE II

CALLISTUS.

THAT'S right.—But think not, though I am so bad a sleeper, that I have been in bed all this time ; no, I have been doing business this morning, I have been making a Will ; but I leave you nothing, SOPHRONIUS ; you want nothing, you are contented. But, my friend, I asked you some questions yesterday, which I don't remember you answered, and I was too intent upon myself to repeat them ; but now I have more time ; I feel as if I should live all this day ; and I would devote a little of it to this stranger pleasure, before I return to myself, and wretchedness. Tell me, my dear friend, how many children you have, and whether they and the amiable URANIA enjoy good health ? Tell me the story of your loves ; give me the history of your life, since I ceased to be CALLISTUS : keep me with you, and save me from myself, as long as you can.

SOPHRO-

DIALOGUE II. 63

SOPHRONIUS.

I HOPED I had reconciled you to yourself.

CALLISTUS.

O NO! never, never can that be! you have done more than I thought possible, you have softened my despair, you have let in a ray of light upon my utter darkness.

BUT I am impatient to know how you have passed your time, how you have pursued happiness and found it.

SOPHRONIUS.

ALAS, my friend, the story of my life will give you little entertainment: I have nothing extraordinary to relate: My way was plain before me, and I never had vivacity enough to start aside from it. I set out in life without forming any great expectations of happiness; all my observations and reflections taught me that the best I might hope for, was peace and ease.

F

WHEN

56 DIALOGUE II.

WHEN I left the College, for the Inn of Court, I forsook a way of life that was agreeable enough to me, for one in favour of which, I was far from being prejudiced; but it was my father's desire that I should engage in it, and I resolved to comply. You, my friend, took care, that I should not surfeit myself, at first, with my new studies, by insisting on my partaking with you, of the diversions and gaieties of the town; but I began to be cloyed with them, when it pleased heaven to put a sudden stop to my pleasures, by taking my worthy father from a life of toil and tumult, to (I doubt not) a state of perfect repose and happiness. I own it was some consolation in my real sorrow, to think that I might now excuse myself from engaging in the same fatigues and cares from which he was just released; but before I resolved to forsake this road of life, I considered maturely, and compared the advantages of it, with the inconveniencies: the fruits I might *possibly* reap

D I A L O G U E II. 62

reap from my labours, were riches, honours, and fame ; for none of which I felt in myself any violent passion ; the sacrifices I must make for these acquisitions were, my leisure, my retirement, my favourite studies, my favourite amusements ; in short, all my natural inclinations, all that was really and essentially necessary to my happiness. I therefore resolved to pursue my own plan ; for upon looking into my affairs, I found that from my estates, and money, I should have a clear income of five hundred pounds a year ; and this I was convinced was as much as I should want for all my schemes. I communicated my resolution to my friend, who would have persuaded me to enter into the fashionable taste of happiness ; but the truth was, my CATALISTUS, I was not more weary than afraid of the life I had led some time ; I therefore determined to quit the town, which I found I could do without much pain, though I could not remain in it without

F 2

danger ;

68 DIALOGUE II.

danger; my only mortification was the parting with my agreeable friend; I took my leave of him with severe regret, and hastened to a place which at first appeared a melancholy scene to me, who was now to act alone upon it; but I had studied my part before hand, and soon grew familiar to it.

I IMMEDIATELY indulged myself in one of my favourite amusements, and set about the improvement of my garden, and the grounds about the house: which I have found a never-failing entertainment for above these twelve years; and may now boast that my habitation, though not fine, is very pleasant and agreeable. I flatter myself that my friend will come and see my improvements as soon as he is able to move; for though he has far more elegant and noble places, he will find at none of them such faithful, assiduous, and affectionate servants, who will exert all their powers to recover his health.

DIALOGUE II. 69

health, to enliven his spirits, and promote his ease and pleasure.

CALLISTUS.

A THOUSAND thanks for that kind thought: but it is impossible, my friend! do not flatter *yourself*; for as to me, I can no longer be imposed upon by delusive hope. No, good Sir, you have a little revived my spirits by your gracious presence, and your unparalleled kindness; you have given me some relief from my torturing fears, by the heavenly balm of your discourse, by your charitable, consolatory arguments last night; but you cannot renew my vital powers; they are spent, my friend, worn out and gone; you cannot restore my peace of mind, my self-satisfaction; and therefore I should be a burthen to myself, and you: But I must die, SOPHRONIUS, perhaps to-day; and God, of his boundless goodness, hear your earnest prayers and mine for mercy!

F 3

SOPHRO-

70 DIALOGUE II.

SOPHRONIUS.

AMEN!

CALLISTUS.

BUT do not let me interrupt you—
go on, dear Sir, and never mention my
wretched name again.

SOPHRONIUS.

THERE were two families in the same
parish that were agreeable neighbours to
me; the first was that of a gentleman of
a large estate who had a wife and four
children, the eldest and the youngest of
which were daughters; the sons are wor-
thy, sensible men; but the second has
much the most genius and vivacity; cir-
cumstances which do not always make a
man the happier. —

CALLISTUS.

It must be his own fault then.

SOPHRONIUS.

THE man who rides a horse of great
mettle, has need of much skill and atten-
tion.

CALLIS-

DIALOGUE II. 71

CALLISTUS.

WELL, I won't interrupt you, Sir.

SOPHRONIUS.

BUT my nearest and best neighbour was the minister of the parish, whose wife was a relation to my other neighbour, the patron of the living :- she died before my father ; so that the family, when I came to live in the country, consisted of the clergyman and his only child, a daughter, then about twenty years of age : as her father lost his other children before they were ripe for his instructions, it was his chief pleasure, to replenish her heart with virtuous sentiments and religious principles ; and to improve her mind in every branch of useful knowledge. You must have known him, or at least have heard that he was a man of extensive learning and great abilities : but you could not know all his excellence ; none but his daughter and myself

72 DIALOGUE II.

could know it thoroughly ; nay, I doubt not but a thousand of his meritorious actions, and benevolent purposes, were known only to the Omniscient. He was a true Christian ; modest, humble, social, and humane : well might he be universally beloved and respected, who could not give offence, and who was ever watchful for opportunities to do good, and to give pleasure. URANIA was the daughter of his mind ; she inherited all his virtues, and perfections, even his understanding and genius : think what an assemblage of internal excellences, refined and finished by female delicacy, and adorned with the elegant dress of a most amiable person ! O dear delight of my days, may heaven preserve you to me !—pardon me, CALLISTUS, I cannot think of her to this hour without rapture.

CALLISTUS.

PARDON you, SOPHRONIUS, for giving me an exquisite pleasure ! think you
I can

DIALOGUE II. 73

I can hear of your happiness without sharing in it! Go on, good Sir.—

SOPHRONIUS.

O WHAT a heart have you, CALLISTUS, who can take such a tender interest in the felicity of your friend!

CALLISTUS.

STRANGE, inconsistent heart!—I do indeed most cordially congratulate you on your felicity; and whilst I think of your happiness, I cease to be miserable;—and yet, this heart, this cruel heart, could consent to outrages—But no more at present;—I am sinking into myself and misery—raise me up again, SOPHRONIUS.

SOPHRONIUS.

THINK how delightfully my time was spent in conversing with two such companions; for URANIA, though diffident among strangers, is easy, free, and cheerful with those of whom she has conceived
a good

74 DIALOGUE II.

a good opinion; and when there are none but such in company, she bears a shining part in conversation. But with her great superiority of understanding, and knowledge, to most persons of both sexes, she is far from being assuming or ostentatious; the most refined and delicate sentiments, the most judicious remarks, the deepest reflections and the brightest turns of thought fall from her lips with perfect indifference; for they appear not to her uncommon or striking. She seems to think herself upon a level with every one she converses with; she is eager to learn, and as ready to communicate her knowledge, and that without the least affectation, with no other thought, I am persuaded, than that of being as serviceable as she can to all about her.—Could I remain long indifferent to such perfection?—I spent much of my time in this delightful society, and I felt my pleasure in it increase every day; indeed I could hardly relish any other.

I WAS

DIALOGUE II. 75

I WAS soon sensible that my admiration and esteem for the lovely URANIA was rising into passion; but I had resolved not to suffer myself to rush headlong into an engagement of this kind: I could see no objection but her fortune, which in all probability would be very small; but was that a consideration to be poised against such transcendent excellence? in my scale of happiness it had no weight at all.

CALLISTUS.

OH! —

[*Groans.*]

SOPHRONIUS.

SIR! What's the matter?

CALLISTUS.

NOTHING at all—Go on, if you please.

SOPHRONIUS.

As I could find no reason to resist my passion, it grew upon me daily; but I had resolution enough not to make any declaration

76 DIALOGUE II.

declaration of it, unless by my eyes, which it was impossible to restrain from speaking : I sometimes fancied that URANIA understood their meaning, and was not offended at it : O with what a glowing pleasure did that flattering fancy expand my heart ! — I was not without competitors for her favour : I had reason to believe that the eldest of my young neighbours sighed in secret for her ; but as he was a man of honour, and knew that he could never gain his family's consent to marry a person so much inferior to him in fortune, he never betrayed his passion but by sighs, and perhaps even those were unperceived by all but his rivals. His behaviour upon this occasion greatly raised my esteem for him ; I am persuaded it was in pursuance of a resolution to get the better of a passion which it was not proper to indulge, that he solicited his father's consent to go abroad. But his younger brother was not so scrupulous ;
 he

DIALOGUE II. 77

He came down about a month before his brother left us, to spend his vacation in the country ; and no sooner was the only rival he apprehended, gone, than he assumed the character of her lover. URANIA was distressed by this sudden attack : neither her inclination nor her honour would permit her to hearken to his addresses : she knew that *her* father was indebted to *his* for all he was worth ; that *his* father would be outrageously offended at *hers*, if he should be thought to encourage such an affair ; — nay, she knew not whether the young gentleman's designs were honourable ; he had never hinted at any proposals that might characterize them for such : — she knew the impetuosity of her lover's temper, and feared some disagreeable consequences from it. The perplexity of her mind soon manifested itself in a visible uneasiness ; she grew melancholy ; I perceived it, and watched the effects, 'till I thought I had discovered the cause :
however,

78 DIALOGUE II.

however, I was desirous of having the secret from herself; I pressed her to reveal it; but she eluded my endeavours for a long time: at length, one day, after he had teized her exceedingly, and even offered to proceed to impertinent freedoms, she yielded to my persuasions, and with tears in her eyes, and blushes on her cheeks, gave me sufficiently to understand the cause of her distress. This instantly determined me: I told her that if she could condescend to free herself from the importunities of one man, by listning to the tenderest and sincerest vows of another, I had an expedient to propose; — and immediately taking her trembling hand, without waiting for an answer, I led her to her father's study, and there, without preface, avowed my passion; and in words expressive of the greatest respect, and the most perfect esteem for both, with the most tender, the most sincere, and faithful love for her, that ever warmed an honest heart, besought

2

their

DIALOGUE II. 79

their favour. The good man stood motionless and silent with surprize : at length the tears started to his eyes, he caught me in his arms, and held me long with a passionate embrace ; 'till quitting me suddenly, he cried — No, generous SOPHRONIUS, it must not be ; — I cannot make her worthy of you. Not worthy of me, did you say, dear Sir ? O that all my powers, my whole Soul devoted to her service, could make me worthy of her ! ——— She has no fortune fit for your acceptance. — Talk not of fortune, I have more ambitious demands ! give me the glory of human nature ! give me your URANIA ! nothing less will satisfy my ardent wishes ; nothing more can be added to my happiness. ——— He replied, Gain her consent, and all I have, is yours ; the jewel of my soul, and a poor five hundred pounds, all that my economy has been able to save ; these, and my best services, my constant wishes and prayers for your happiness in this world

world and the next, are all the acknowledgments I can make for the honour you do my family ; for ——— Do not oppress me ! — was all I could say to stop him : I was indeed oppressed with his goodness ; and could no otherwise express my sense of it, or support myself in the agitation I was in, than by leaning with my elbow on my own bent knee, with my cheek upon his hand, which I held in both my own : ——— If you must kneel, dear Sir, said he, *there* it would be rather less improper at present ; turn, and try if she can resist the eloquence of those glistening eyes. I turned round, and found her back towards me : Will you not look on me, Madam ? She dried her eyes with her handkerchief ; she turned, and giving me her lovely hand, which I kissed with inexpressible rapture, — I am yours, worthy Sir, said she : — I have no doubt of your sincerity, and will not pretend to make a merit of an action, which is but a just expression of my esteem for
your

DIALOGUE II. 81

your virtues. — Here was a noble frankness; my CALLISTUS ! there is a dignity in her manner that scorns to submit to the little arts of affectation ; and the purity of her thoughts wants no disguise.

CALLISTUS.

HAPPY SOPHRONIUS ! happy URANIA ! Happiness like yours is the natural consequence of virtue ; and misery, misery like mine, the inevitable attendant upon vice.

SOPHRONIUS.

I HAVE not done yet.

CALLISTUS.

O, I am glad of it. When you have done, I die.

SOPHRONIUS.

God forbid !

CALLISTUS.

AMEN, amen — Go on, *excellent*
SOPHRONIUS.

G

SOPHRO-

82 DIALOGUE II.

SOPHRONIUS.

DEAREST CALLISTUS, do not send me to look into myself with shame ! call me happy, and you remind me to be more grateful, but call me not *good* ; alas, it makes me recollect how many offences. I have to be forgiven ! Prosperity has been my trial, Sir ; and God grant, that through his assistance and mercy, I may be approved at last !

CALLISTUS.

O, SOPHRONIUS, what have you done ! What a conclusion you have brought me to ! If *you* are not good, then what am *I* ? How can you be so inconsistent ! but lately you flattered me with heaven ; and now you shut me out from all hopes of it.

SOPHRONIUS.

SIR, if we had only our own merits to plead, we might both be deemed equally distant from it : but I trust in the same
goodness.

DIALOGUE II. 83

goodness and compassion, the same satisfaction and redemption for us both. Who shall set bounds to infinite mercy? If it cannot be extended to you, who shall say it would reach to me? But granting you have most to be forgiven, has not your repentance — O, CALLISTUS, there I must learn of you!

CALLISTUS.

WELL, I will call you excellent; exceedingly good I am sure you are to me! I cannot express the sense I have of your goodness; — and so relieve me from the vain attempt by the continuation of your story.

SOPHRONUS.

I WAS scarce got home to reflect upon the business of that happy morning, and the consequences of it, when I was interrupted in my delightful meditations, by a visit from my rival: he accosted me with great civility, but with an air of

84 DIALOGUE II.

importance ; he told me he was come on a solemn embassy, and he hoped, and could not doubt, he should be a very welcome messenger. He came, he said, from his father, with the approbation of all the family, with proposals which would do honour to both parties : that my known worth and prudence made an alliance with me thought honourable ; — I fear, CALLISTUS, it is a sign we are in a bad world, when a man's refraining from flagrant wickedness, can make him remarked as extraordinary. — Well, my alliance, it seems, was not esteemed dishonourable, by a family who thought they gave some proofs of their own merit, when they offered me their eldest daughter, a beautiful and accomplished lady, with a fortune to which I could have no pretensions, but by that worth, with which they claimed kindred ; but what, he was sure, I should think the greatest honour, was, that the lady was already prepared to favour my address ; — indeed

DIALOGUE II. 85

deed he had some reason to suspect that she had long looked upon me with partial eyes; — to say the truth — for he dared trust my generosity with the secret, her illness had discovered it. Here he stopped. I was amazed, I was shocked — she had indeed been ill; — was ill; but little did I suspect the cause: URANIA had so thoroughly ingrossed my attention, that no other woman could attract it. I answered, that I was equally surprised, honoured, and afflicted by this proposal: that not to keep him in suspense, I would at once inform him, it was impossible for me to accept the great honour which was offered me, because my affections and my vows were previously engaged. — Engaged, Sir? cried he with surprize — Yes, Sir, replied I, engaged to URANIA. To whom, Sir? Engaged to whom did you say? — To the most amiable URANIA, Sir. — To URANIA! Sure — Sure, Sir, I do not hear you right! — This very morning

86 D I A L O G U E II,

have I received her father's and her sanction to my love. — 'Tis false, cried he, rage sparkling in his eyes. — I pitied the poor youth, I was too happy to be angry, and composedly bid him go and ask them, and then I did not doubt he would beg my pardon. — You are not married, Sir? — No, Sir. — Nor ever shall be to *her*! He then rushed out of the house with the fury of a madman. He took my advice in part, for in a quarter of an hour afterwards, I had a message from URANIA, to desire me to come to her immediately. I found her in tears: she told me, with a trembling voice, of the rude visit he had made her: the furious boy (he was then but twenty years old) demanded abruptly whether she was engaged — she frankly told him she was, and to whom — He stamped, and swore vehemently we should both repent our treachery to him. — He reproached her with coquetry and infidelity, though she solemnly protested, and I am firmly persuaded,

DIALOGUE II. 87

suaded; she had never given him the least encouragement : he concluded, that if she did indeed love SOPHRONIUS, she should be cautious how she acted ; for he vowed, if she proceeded one step further in this plot upon his peace, he would revenge himself on her in the way that would most hurt her.

Now I was angry ; his brutal treatment of URANIA had roused the lion in me ; if at that instant he had been within my reach — I fear I should have had no command of myself. URANIA saw the agitation I was in ; she was still more frightened ; and upon my making a motion to go, she fell down in a swoon at my feet. What a day was this ! What strange transitions ! what violent emotions ! O, CALLISTUS, what a world is this to set our hearts upon, when every rash fool, where we are surrounded with thousands, can put a sudden stop to our happiness ; — can in a moment change it into perfect misery.

88 D I A L O G U E II.

I now forgot every thing but my love's distress. — Pity and sorrow possessed me wholly.

LIFE returned to my URANIA's eyes, and blushes to her cheeks, when she found herself in the arms of a man, before she could recollect who he was; she seemed to strain her eyes open to look up in my face; and then, as if satisfied she was in safe and honourable hands, she laid her languid head upon my bosom in perfect confidence and peace. Pleasure now renewed her claim; a new sort of pleasure warmed my heart; I felt my dearest love in my arms; I considered myself, and my URANIA seemed to consider me, in the glorious character of her comforter, and protector. I kissed her lovely forehead, and laid my glowing cheek upon it; she raised up her head, and looked at me again with more enlivened eyes, with eyes enlivened by delight: — ineffable delight! — superlative happiness! when two honest hearts
can

D I A L O G U E II. 89

can mix without reserve, without a doubt of each other's goodness! — Will you leave me? said she, with eyes that looked as if she knew I would not — No, my URANIA, never in distress! — But what am I doing? I could run on for ever, and forget every thing but my URANIA; — no, not my CALLISTUS: — I return to pursue his commands.

SHE signified her fears to me: I told her she need not be under any concern; my mind was serene again; all was peace and pleasure within: — that the delight I experienced whilst I held her in my arms, made me consider the greatness of my rival's disappointment with compassion: that it would be a shame for a man so happy as I was, not to bear with the impatience of a sufferer like him: that I meditated a plan to sooth his madness, and perhaps might assist him to cure it: and if she would give me leave, I would go and put my thought in execution. URANIA said she knew she might trust my
prudence

90 DIALOGUE II.

prudence and humanity ; and God forbid she should ever obstruct the benevolent purposes of my heart.

I WENT home, and immediately sat down to write to my impetuous foe. I believe I can recollect the letter, for I wrote it with great deliberation, and have preserved it as a lesson to myself for the future.

CALLISTUS.

TRY, dear SOPHRONIUS, for I long to hear it.

SOPHRONIUS.

‘ SIR,

‘ WHEN you see my hand, and recollect some words which fell from you when you left my house, some angry words, perhaps you will expect an address different from what you will find here : but, Sir, when I consider the occasion of your passion, I can by no means think a rash expression is a sufficient cause for me to pursue your
‘ life,

D I A L O G U E II. 91

‘ life, or hazard my own ; especially,
 ‘ when I consider that yours is dear to a
 ‘ numerous family, which I greatly re-
 ‘ spect and love, and can flatter myself
 ‘ that my own is of some importance to
 ‘ the happiness of a few worthy persons.
 ‘ But at the same time that you incurred
 ‘ (I doubt not in your own opinion) *my*
 ‘ resentment, you threatened me with
 ‘ *yours* ; — I am persuaded you are too
 ‘ brave yourself, to suspect that I have
 ‘ any base fear of that resentment, tho’
 ‘ I wish to disarm it : there was a time,
 ‘ when if I had unfortunately met you,
 ‘ I fear I should have yielded to my own
 ‘ passion ; but now I should be ashamed
 ‘ not to be able to pardon an infirmity
 ‘ in you, for which, in myself, I have
 ‘ already implored the forgiveness of
 ‘ heaven : the time I speak of, was when
 ‘ I heard from the lady’s own lips, the
 ‘ relation of your late behaviour to her.
 ‘ Indeed, Sir, you have much to answer
 ‘ for to her ; for it is impossible you can
 ‘ think

92 DIALOGUE II.

' think (when you think coolly) that
 ' you have the least pretence to con-
 ' troul her actions, or to demand an ac-
 ' count of them. Put yourself in my
 ' place for a moment, and me in yours,
 ' and see what you would think of *me*,
 ' if I were to pretend to arrest you in
 ' the innocent pursuit of happiness : I
 ' have already placed myself in your si-
 ' tuation, and feel that you deserve com-
 ' passion : but, be bold, SEBASTIAN ;
 ' exert your fortitude ; exert your rea-
 ' son ; and, instead of pity, deserve ad-
 ' miration ; deserve your own, and hea-
 ' ven's applause ; subdue a passion, which
 ' can never be gratified : disturb not
 ' the peace of a virtuous woman whom
 ' you profess to love ; destroy not your
 ' own peace, by harbouring designs,
 ' which must be as fruitless as they are
 ' injurious : pardon me that I should say it
 ' — believe me, I mean not to insult you,
 ' but — her affections — I will say no
 ' more. — You are young, time will do
 ' much

DI A L O G U E II. 93

‘ much for you : you are amiable, and
‘ your virtues and perfections must one
‘ day meet with their reward : be just,
‘ be generous, and you will be happy ;
‘ happier at least than you could possibly
‘ be by any other means. If you have
‘ the nobleness of mind, the candour
‘ you see I suppose you to have, you
‘ will justify me in calling myself still

‘ Your faithful friend

‘ and humble servant.’

I KNEW that SEBASTIAN had good sense, and a good heart ; and therefore was persuaded that if he could be brought to think coolly, he would think rightly : you will find by his answer that I was not much mistaken : it was delivered to me the next morning, and I believe was in these words :

‘ S I R,

94 DIALOGUE II.

‘ S I R,

‘ W H E N I received your letter, I did indeed expect to find the contents very different, for I was conscious of having spoken words in passion, which I doubt not were injurious, tho’ I cannot particularly recollect them; for at that time I was hardly in my senses. You will find that I mean still to be your rival, Sir, your rival in virtue; would to God you were not mine in love! You exhort me to magnanimity; I have endeavoured to avail myself of your advice; and the first instance was in determining not to write you an answer ’till this morning, that I might have time to compose my tumultuous thoughts, in order to judge fairly of the contents of your letter; the consequence of this was, that I could not but perceive that I had been greatly in the wrong, and ought to acknowledge it: the next instance is, that I now freely desire your pardon; and will

DIALOGUE II. 95

' will trust to your generosity, to inter-
 ' cede with the much injured URANIA
 ' for her forgiveness of a fault, which
 ' can have no excuse but from the
 ' phrenzy of a man in despair : I dare
 ' not see her face again, upon several
 ' accounts ; but if she can ever think
 ' without abhorrence and contempt, of
 ' a wretch, who wants not that aggrava-
 ' tion to his shame and misery, it would
 ' be generous to let me know it. —
 ' Time may do much, you say ; I will
 ' try what time can do — absence too,
 ' I will try ; — I will return immediately
 ' to college, and, if I can, will study
 ' there ; religion is my proper study ;
 ' I want all its assistance to enable me to
 ' bear my own lot, and to think, without
 ' rancour, of yours. SOPHRONIUS, fare-
 ' wel : you will be happy in spite of me,
 ' for you deserve to be so.

' *If I commend thee, sure thy worth is great !*

' I hope

96 DIALOGUE II.

‘ I hope to see you no more, ’till I can with
‘ sincerity subscribe myself

‘ Your friend,

‘ SEBASTIAN.’

CALLISTUS.

POOR SEBASTIAN ! I really pity the
unhappy youth !

SOPHRONIUS.

PERHAPS this was the most fortunate incident in his life ; it gave a new turn to his thoughts ; he was in danger from his extreme vivacity ; this disappointment gave a check to it. Affliction is often our best friend, whose awful lessons are never so necessary as in youth : we are apt to set out in life, ardent in the pursuit of happiness, and sanguine in the hopes of attaining it ; but we generally go upon a wrong scent ; we seek for it among diversions and sensual pleasures, where it is not to be found ; happy they
who

DIALOGUE II. 97

who are called off by affliction, and thrown into the right course !

SEBASTIAN kept his resolution, and set out the next day for the university : his books diverted his thoughts from their melancholy object, and by degrees engaged all his attention : the chearful society of the place, and the natural propensity of youthful minds to joy, soon enabled him to recover his peace of mind, and he returned to the enjoyment of life with more appetite from this interruption. I did not see him again, 'till above a year afterwards, when he came in person, and politely asked URANIA's and my pardon for the uneasiness he had given us ; and wished us all joy and happiness. He is now our worthy rector, is himself married, and his and his wife's agreeable conversation has once more renewed my pleasure in visiting the rectory. Soon after his departure, URANIA became indeed *my* URANIA ; we solemnly dedicated ourselves to each other ; and have suc-

H

ceeded

98 DIALOGUE II.

ceeded by the assistance of heaven, as far as the circumstances of this imperfect state will permit, in our mutual and sincere endeavours to promote each other's happiness.

AND here of course ends my story.

CALLISTUS.

NOT so, my friend ; you have never yet told me how many children you have, nor any thing concerning them. Come, surely SOPHRONIUS you may prolong my entertainment a little.

SOPHRONIUS.

WE have had six, but the last was taken from us ; that, and the death of my excellent father-in-law, are the only afflictions it has pleased heaven to send us since our marriage. We lost him almost four years ago ; a grievous loss it was ! for in him we were deprived of a delightful companion, a most fond parent, and a perfect friend. URANIA
grieved

DIALOGUE II. 99

grieved as one thoroughly sensible of the great good she was bereft of; but not as one without hope: she professed herself ashamed of the excess of her sorrow, when she considered that it was only for her own pleasure; for as to him, she doubted not but he had changed his state infinitely for the better; and had an humble confidence that in a few years they should meet again, never more to feel the pain of parting. But notwithstanding these consolatory arguments, this affliction hurt her; what must it have done if she had wanted them? What should I do, if I could not call them to my assistance? I begin to prepare myself for my share of mortal misery; for from this calamity, and now lately the loss of the child, I fear UKANIA's constitution begins to decline: God only knows! perhaps it may please him to restore it; if not, his holy will be done!

H 2

CALLISTO

CALLISTUS.

O HAPPY SOPHRONIUS ! you know not, cannot know what misery is : with your hopes, your expectations, your certain prospects of eternal happiness, soon to succeed to transient sufferings, how easily are such sufferings to be endured !

I FEAR you have done, Sir. Be so good then to reach me that paper which lies upon the escrutoire. This is my Will : I have left your children a thousand pounds a-piece, and you a mark of my perfect confidence in your goodness and friendship, by naming you sole executor. — Not a word, I beseech you — it is perfectly needless. — I know your heart. I would desire you to keep this in your own custody ; there is a duplicate executed in that escrutoire. Your trouble will soon begin ; and I hope be soon ended. And now, farewell to every sensation of pleasure !

BUT before I begin upon the remainder of my shocking story, I will endeavour

D I A L O G U E II. 101

your to represent to you what passed in my mind after you left me last night.

You found me in despair: I was already in the jaws of hell: I could not, durst not think of repentance, which presumes a possibility of forgiveness: I could not, durst not think of praying; I spent my time in recollecting all my sins, for which I pronounced sentence against my own soul. Ghosts and fiends seemed to stalk about my chamber, and terrified me almost to madness: the little sleep I had was disturbed with horrid dreams: but, in the night before I sent for you, I dreamed that I was on the brink of a frightful precipice, and that I was pushed forward by an irresistible power, 'till it seemed impossible for me to avoid the certain perdition; when, in the instant that I was going to plunge, I felt myself snatcht back some paces: I turned to look for my wonderful deliverer, when I beheld, with equal joy and confusion, my guardian angel, So-

102 D I A L O G U E II.

PHRONIUS. The vast surprize awaked me; but so strong was the impressi-
 on, that even when awake, I address'd my-
 self to speak to you. I was presently sen-
 sible that I was in my own room and
 bed; but it seem'd perfectly light; I
 saw every thing plainly, but you was
 the delightful object upon which I fixed
 my eyes: my own voice recalled my
 senses, banish'd your image, and left me
 in darkness, all but a dim lamp, which
 was hardly perceptible through my cur-
 tains. I found myself in a cold sweat,
 my heart and every pulse in my body
 beating with the utmost violence and
 precipitation. It was a long while be-
 fore I was tolerably compos'd, and could
 recollect with some degree of calmness,
 this striking dream; happily did it strike
 me; for, without such an impulse, I
 should hardly have had the confidence
 to hope for the comfort you have brought
 me. The first thing I did when I rose,
 was to write the letter you received, and
 dispatch

D I A L O G U E II. 103

dispatch a cartiage to fetch you. I thought it an age 'till it returned—You came—my best friend ! and the sight of you seemed like a glimpse of heaven. Dear, humane friend, your presence brought me back to life ; your words have distilled like healing balm upon my wounded soul ; O how you have comforted, and softened my obdurate heart ! I have wept, I have prayed, I have looked up to heaven, and seen a Creator happy in communicating happiness to his creatures ; a judge of boundless mercy ; and a Redeemer of unspeakable goodness, who would not that any should perish everlastingly : I have conceived a hope of the possibility that even I, wretched straggler as I have been, may yet be recalled, and received again into the fold, though by far the most unworthy of the flock.

AFTER your kind, consolatory conversation last night, I went to bed with a mind more easy and composed than I

H 4 had

104 D I A L O G U E II.

had felt for some months : as soon as I was left alone, I addressed myself to prayer, with a heart penetrated with the most lively sense of my own deplorable unworthiness, which might well produce the deepest humiliation, the most severe contrition, and an agony of truly penitential sorrow. O what a dreadful thing it is to repent of such sins as mine ! how unequal a purchase of all the transient pleasures which in those sins I sought ! My eyes and face were scalded with floods of bitter tears ! surely my heart bled within me ! my corporal powers were unable long to sustain the violent agitation of my mind, and uniting to drag down my unwilling, still aspiring soul to earth, plunged it into a deep sleep for some hours : I waked calm, and wonderfully refreshed ; and had only time to sigh out my grateful and profound acknowledgments for the blessing, when I dropped asleep again ; but not in such deep oblivion ; my imagination slept no more ;

D I A L O G U E II. 105

more ; but, as if pleased with the interval it had from its cruel labours, entertained me with wild amusing fancies. I waked again to the sad thoughts of dying, but not with the same hopeless horror of living in eternal misery : I addressed myself, with a confidence which I feared might be presumptuous, to the throne of mercy ; but not without the most profound heart-humiliation, and fresh streams of deep repentant sorrow. I arose with more composure of mind than I had felt for some months. I resolved immediately to perform the last business I had to do on earth ; and to leave some testimony of my grateful acknowledgments to you, dear Sir, for all your goodness to me : I then recollected the sad task I had to finish, which obliged me to recal horrid scenes, that plunged me into new terrors, from which your chearing presence again relieved me.

SOPHRO-

106 D I A L O G U E II.

SOPHRONIUS.

DEAREST CALLISTUS, what obliges you to pursue this task which you seem so much to dread, and so indeed do I, for I fear it will hurt you? You are now composed, refreshed, and amended, I think, in every respect; why should you again ruffle and fatigue your spirits? If it must be done, stay 'till you are better, stay till you are stronger, and then you shall do what you please.

CALLISTUS.

ALAS, my friend, why will you still flatter yourself and me? It is strange that I cannot persuade you to believe it impossible for me ever to be well again! My physicians have assured me that I cannot live; and if it had not been too sure, they would not have said so. No, SOPHRONIUS, I have absolutely no more hopes in this life; and oh! I still fear that when you have heard me out, you
will

DIALOGUE - II. 107

will destroy the hope you would revive in me of another ; however, it is a penance I have imposed upon myself, and I cannot rest 'till I have done it : I have already deferred it too long, and fear at last I shall not have time to finish it.

SOPHRONIUS.

WELL, Sir, if it must be so, I beseech you keep me no longer in suspense.

CALLISTUS.

WHERE did I leave off yesterday ?

SOPHRONIUS.

I LEFT you, Sir, abroad.

CALLISTUS.

O, YES, you left me surrounded with infidels and atheists. But I believe I did not mention to you another friend I called to my assistance, and all too weak to secure me from the assaults of persecuting conscience. You know, SOPHRONIUS,

108 D I A L O G U E II.

that for some years of my youth, I never was guilty of excess in drinking ; and I may do myself the justice to say, that I never was tempted to this vice by the allurements of pleasure ; but, alas ! I was driven to it at last by the fear of pain. Soon after my disappointment with LUCINDA, I had recourse to this fatal remedy, which daily procured me a cessation for some hours from all mental sufferings ; but it soon brought on new bodily complaints, of which I was sensible every morning ; but, to assuage the more intolerable anguish of my conscience, I returned every night to the stupefying poison. This brutal practice I continued, even in a country remarkable for sobriety, and found my new friends not averse to this seasonable support of a bad argument. And now, absurdly boldest, when in every respect weakest, we bravely defied the living God ; and ridiculed and reviled the great Saviour of mankind. — My soul shrinks within me whilst I speak it !

it! — I see you are shockt too, and therefore I will dwell no longer on the tremendous madness.

My temporal punishments soon began ; my appetite insensibly decayed ; pains seized my stomach and bowels ; my nerves relaxed ; my strength forsook me : I used more poison as an antidote ; my spirits exhaled, and my flesh melted with the consuming fire. I went to the Spaw, but the waters could not cure my soul ; *there* were my most racking pains ; these were to be assuaged, whatever became of my wretched body : however, in spite of my intemperance, the salutary streams gave me some relief ; but I was advised to return to our own Bath.

ONCE more I re-visited my native country ; but with no joyful heart ; the Fury still pursued, and lashed me from shore to shore. O gracious God, how little worthy was I to partake the sovereign blessing which thou, with healing hand,

116 DIALOGUE II.

hand, pourest forth equally to the just and unjust from the perennial spring !

I HAD not been at Bath above a fortnight before I perceived a great amendment : my stomach was warmed and strengthened, and my appetite in some measure restored ; my spirits were enlivened ; my flesh increasing, and my colour returning. I could not experience this wonderful change without sensations of pleasure, nay, of gratitude ; I could not but acknowledge the hand that healed me, and I longed to return my thanks ; but how could I dare to lift up my eyes to that Heaven, to which I had so long wilfully and studiously closed them ! My reason seemed to be returning with my health ; my mind was certainly clearer than it had been for a long time ; for I was plainly told by my physician, that if I continued my excesses there, I should inevitably kill myself soon : I trembled and obeyed : Why did I *tremble*—but that in spite of all
my

DIALOGUE II. 111

my bravadoes, and self-deceit, I still *believed* — And, O, fool that I was, why, if I believed, did I not obey Him, whom if I had preserved my friend, nought else could have made me tremble ! I made this reflection then, which produced resolutions of reformation ; but, alas ! they were too feeble to resist the temptations I was soon to experience.

I HAD been at Bath a month, when one day as I was walking from the rooms to my lodging, I was stopped by a crowd moving towards me ; in the midst of which I perceived an elderly gentlewoman, whom I recollected to have seen at the pump-room, in whose face the trickling tears were the least indication of distress : by her side walked an ill-looking fellow, whom she now and then lifted up her dejected eyes to observe, with a mixture of terror and disgust : behind, was a young woman, whose face I could not see, the upper part of it being concealed by her hat, and the lower
by

112. D I A L O G U E II.

by her white handkerchief, which being frequently applied to her eyes, shewed that she was a person interested in the melancholy scene: I enquired what it meant, and was told it was only an old woman arrested. I had not yet entirely lost my humanity; I was shocked and affected: I stepped up to the man who guarded them — one of those menial ministers of Justice, who generally so well represent the terrors of it, — asked him what the debt was, and found it was such a trifle as I could instantly discharge: Whilst this affair was adjusting, the old lady ceased from weeping, and seemed to observe what passed with wild wonder and surprize; but when I had dismissed the officer, dispersed the crowd, and offered my service to wait on them to their lodging, a fresh burst of tears prevented any answer but a low curtesy.

Now, first, I had a sight of the face of the young woman, who, whilst she curtsied with modest gratitude, lifted up the
the

DIALOGUE II. 213

the sweetest eyes that ever melted hearts ; joy, surprize, and earnest acknowledgment glowed through the shining suffusion of tears. You may be sure my curiosity was now sufficiently excited. When we came to the door, I addressed myself to the elder lady, and respectfully begged to know in what manner I could be of any service to her ; she answered, with a faltering voice, that she was ashamed of her inability to express the deep sense she had of the great service I had already done her ; but that if I could condescend to enter so mean an apartment, she wished I would stay 'till her gratitude could find utterance. I replied, that what I had done was a trifle not to be mentioned ; but if she would point out the method, it would be a great pleasure to me to merit her favourable opinion ; and so I entered her room, which indeed was very small, and poorly furnished. When we were seated, the good lady began to pour forth from her grate-

I ful

112 D I A L O G U E II.

ful heart a profusion of acknowledgments; in which the daughter signified her concurrence, by bowing at the close of every sentence, but without speaking a word; which indeed was perfectly unnecessary, for her ardent eyes, her glowing cheeks, and all her lovely animated face spoke so pathetically as to touch my inmost soul: I endeavoured to interrupt a discourse which gave me great uneasiness, by telling the old lady that I believed I had seen her at the baths, and feared she attended them through a sad necessity, begging to know the nature of her illness, and what advice she had had. You leave my heart too full, answered she; but I had rather suffer that pain, than persist in giving you any: as to your kind enquiries, Sir, my complaints were many, but the chief was an inveterate rheumatism, which often attacked my head and stomach, and left me no hope of ease but from the use of these baths; but this is a remedy too expensive

DIALOGUE II. 115

pensive for persons in my circumstances ; and therefore I suffered myself to be reduced to the last extremity, before I had recourse to it ; and you have seen, Sir, with generous compassion, the sad consequence of my rash attempt : I wish I had stayed at home, and patiently expected the only effectual relief for all my sufferings, which surely could not have been deferred much longer. I cannot (continued she) look back, without affrightment and horror, at the dismal condition into which I was going to be plunged, and in which my poor dear child must have been involved, had not you, like a pitying angel, snatched us out of the very jaws of ruin. I begged she would endeavour to forget what was past, and look forward with more hope ; and said, I should think it a duty, the performance of which is its own reward, since heaven had brought me acquainted with her difficulties, to do all in my power to assist her ; that I could not help

116 DIALOGUE II.

fearing she had wanted the advice of a physician. She said, indeed she could by no means afford to employ one : — I desired she would give me leave to send her mine, who was so worthy a man, that I was sure he would take as much pleasure as I did, in serving her. She thanked me, but said it was not necessary, as she was already greatly recovered ; and she believed her apothecary very well understood her case : I enquired who he was, and soon after, taking my leave, having obtained permission to wait on them again, I went to him to learn what I could concerning these ladies, whose distress seemed the more pitiable, as by their conversation, and behaviour, one could not help believing they had enjoyed better fortune : he told me he knew nothing of their story ; but the elder lady —— (whose name I will call EUGENIA—) appeared to be a woman of sense and worth : that she had suffered a great deal in her health ; and he feared her

D I A L O G U E II. 117

her mind, as well as body, had its share of uneasiness; for they seemed to be in very low circumstances, and had often begged him to be more sparing of his trouble, as it was not in their power to reward him as they wished: — that the daughter was a sweet modest young creature, to her mother a most dutiful and affectionate child, an assiduous servant, and a most tender nurse: that she had often borrowed books of him to read to her mother in her confinement; for her distemper being thrown out into the extremities, she had been helpless for above a fortnight; in which time they had seen nobody but himself and their landlady, who now and then looked in upon them, but with no great kindness in her manner. I desired him to call upon them immediately, and deliver a bank-bill which I gave him, and the next day I waited upon them. O, Sir, (cried the good lady) am I never to see you without such violent emotion — your goodness will

118 D I A L O G U E II.

destroy me ! — God forbid (interrupted I) that I should miss my aim so far ! but do not you, dear Madam, counteract me ; do not hurt yourself ; if you must express so much gratitude for such small benefits, do it in sparing me all the pain you can, and be assured I cannot see you uneasy without it : I have heard of your patient sufferings, but now you do not exert your usual equanimity : let me ask, if you was in my situation, and I in yours, don't you think you would do, at least, as I do ? — The young lady turned towards the window, and hastily pulled out her handkerchief ; and her mother cried, O, Sir ! and I am sure you would then do as we do, all but adore the benevolent heart that shewed such divine compassion on the fatherless and friendless ! — friendless did I say ? I wronged your goodness ! — That's right, Madam, look upon me as your friend, and let me have the honour of calling you mine, and then we shall have a mutual claim to the assistance of each other. —

SOPHRO.

DIALOGUE - II. 119.

SOPHRONIUS

(interrupting him.)

MY own CALLISTUS! let me embrace
my dearest friend! I have him all — all
my CALLISTUS! my generous, humane—

CALLISTUS

(interrupting.)

O, do not praise me, SOPHRONIUS ! I am condemning myself ; this gleam of light will only add more horror to the utter darkness.

I CULTIVATED my new-made friendship by daily visits; and when we began to be a little more familiar, I enquired into the particulars of EUGENIA's past life: she told me she was the daughter of a country gentleman, contrary to whose inclinations she was married very early in life to an officer in the army, who had no other income than his pay: though a mutual passion was the foundation of their union, their happiness had been of very short dura-

110 DIALOGUE . II.

tion: he proved an unprincipled rake; wasted all her fortune in his intemperate pleasures; and treated his unhappy wife, first with neglect, and afterwards with cruelty. His excesses introduced painful distempers, which brought him to an untimely end; and EUGENIA was left a widow with a son and daughter, and no provision but her pension. — Her son was happily provided for in the navy, and was at that time stationed abroad; the daughter, who could not be prevailed on to leave her mother alone in a very ill state of health, lived with her in an obscure village, and helped to support her by her needle; poor EUGENIA's bodily sufferings increasing to an intolerable degree, forced her to seek relief in this place, where she was soon reduced to the distress in which I found her; a distress which had impressed her mind with peculiar horror. — 'The idea of being cast into a gaol,' said she, 'after all my past sufferings, with all my present infirmities, had
' over,

DIALOGUE II. 121

'overpowered my patience! — You
 'would not have seen me weep, had I
 'not heard my poor child's sobs — my
 'heart was abandoned to fullen despair
 '——Alas, dear maid! thy hapless mo-
 'ther's life is a burden instead of a sup-
 'port to thy youth! would I could lay
 'it down, and relieve myself and you!
 '—but let me not be impatient! let
 'me not be unthankful to that pitying
 'power who sent you to my rescue! —
 'No — I am content to live, to express
 'my gratitude to my generous bene-
 'factor; to renew my daily ardent
 'prayers!'—— Here she stopped — she
 clasped her hands, and closed her eyes,
 for a few moments, whilst the tears trick-
 led faster down her cheeks. — I could
 not restrain mine.

SOPHRONIUS.

'I know the tenderness of your heart,
 dear Sir, and what it must have felt on
 such an occasion:

CALLISTUS.

CRUEL, cruel, heart ! which could melt at the story of her past woes, and then plunge her into new depths of misery, compared to which, her former sufferings were trifles — O what can expiate my guilt ? O that I could live longer ! that I could now suffer more ten thousand times ! — if all would do ! ——

SOPHRONIUS.

ALL that we *can* do, *will* do, added to our Saviour's satisfactory sufferings ; the will alone, when it is (as here, surely, it is) sincere, will be accepted, though the power be denied.

CALLISTUS.

O God, thou knowest it is ! — O that what is done could be undone ! that I could call them back to life ! that I might surrender up to them all my possessions, all myself, to be punished and tormented
at

DIALOGUE II: 123.

at their discretion : alas ! their power of hurting me, could not be equal to the injuries I did them !

SOPHRONIUS.

DEAR CALLISTUS, do not torture yourself and me, by this cruel suspense ; if it must be, defer no longer to disclose the dreadful scene.

CALLISTUS.

BEAR with me, my friend ! — I will, if I can, go on ; but how can I go on, without stopping sometimes to give vent to my full heart, which else would burst ?

THINK that I have been acquainted with the distressed ladies about a fortnight ; think that the daughter is somewhat familiarized to the sight of me ; for having never conversed, since she was twelve years old, with a man of any figure, she seemed at first to be awed by my appearance : she speaks — she mixes a little in the conversation — think

— O no, you cannot imagine to yourself the astonishing charms both of mind and body which she displays in speaking ; her dark blue eyes, which before were all softness, sweetness, and modesty, now sparkle with intelligence and sensibility, and her whole delicate person assumes an animated air — Alas ! I am speaking of her, as if she still existed ! — ay, so she does in heaven — but I must never more be blest with a sight of her ! — Such simplicity — such innocence — such genuine purity of heart, I never before found in woman — With regard to others, she was faultless ; her credulity, her unsuspecting confidence, which proved so fatal to herself, were the natural consequences of her own integrity, and her ignorance of the world. — Too soon I loved her — Villain, thou liest — thou never lovedst her — O heavens, did I not love her ? Why then I never loved SOPHRONIUS — I never loved my father, or my mother ; for all that I had ever felt of
of

of love for all those to whom I owed the greatest affection — all, all together made not the sum of what I felt for her! — And didst thou love her then? — didst thou not deceive her? — didst thou not destroy her? — O how cruelly destroy her! — strange — strange! —

I HAD been at Bath two months, and was tired of it: I had received great benefit from the waters, but perhaps more from my new acquaintance. Pleasures to which I had long been a stranger, soothed my softning heart: I had some degree of satisfaction in myself; for as yet I had formed no hellish plot against the excellent MELINDA. I had had the resolution to leave off one of my bad habits, and I felt the energy of some of my old virtuous affections: I had done, I was daily doing, good to worth in distress: benevolence and generosity disdained not to linger in my heart: I felt again that I believed a God; my soul overflowed with gratitude to him for the restoration
of

of my health ; and I even seriously purposed to act, for the future, more agreeably to his divine will. I fancy the uniformly good are not conscious of the sweet effects of virtue, even on the body ; I mean, not merely by escaping the disorders which are the natural consequents of some vices, but by its own essential efficacy :

Sweet are the slumbers of the virtuous man.

Sweetly flows the blood which is not agitated by violent passions ; sweet, serene, and chearful are the spirits which are not harrassed by remorse : And, O, how is the whole composition cheared and animated, by the pleasurable sensations which attend the consciousness of doing good !

I FOUND that the ladies had been at Bath six weeks ; and EUGENIA being surprizingly recovered, I asked them one day when they proposed leaving the place. EUGENIA said they had been desirous of quitting it some time ; but that, to
say

say the truth, they imagined I should remove very soon, and they chose to wait 'till I was gone. I did not well know how to interpret this, and begged an explanation of it. She seemed loth to say any more; but, as I insisted upon knowing the truth, she told me at last, that when I was gone, they could get away quietly in their own method; but they feared if they had mentioned going before me, that I should, from my unwearied goodness, engage myself in some new trouble upon their account. I smiled, and told them I was glad I had discovered their plot, but intended not to let them escape so easily; that I had no thoughts of leaving Bath 'till they did, and hoped so to contrive it, as not to give either side the pain of parting: there is a good deal of presuming vanity in that speech (said I); don't you think so, Madam? If I had not known you so long, Sir, (replied she) I should have thought there had been a reproach couched under that question,

128 D I A L O G U E II.

question, which I am sure we do not deserve, nor, if we did, could you have meant. I caught the dear MELINDA's eyes repeating after her mother — Indeed, Sir, I do not deserve to be reproached with ingratitude ! — Then, ladies, I have a method to propose to you of overpaying at once all the mighty debts which your delicate imaginations have so outrageously exaggerated. — O, Sir, (cried the good lady) I could return to the sad place from which your beneficence delivered me, if, by so doing, I could prove my earnest desire of making all the return that is possible, for the obligations you have heaped upon us. — Well, Madam, then the request I have to make to you, is to return with me to a place, which it shall be my business to render as agreeable to you as possible, and that in your own way ; your habitation shall be more suited to your humility than to my good will ; it shall be entirely your own ; nor will I presume to intrude

D I A L O G U E II. 129

intrude one moment without your leave.

— Good God, Sir, do you call this a way to pay debts? the very thought overpowers me : no, Sir, I will go back to my cottage, and there, if my disorders return, I will wait with what patience I can, 'till this

Too, too solid mass shall melt :

And with my last breath I will pray for blessings to be showered on your head, with the same unsparing hand with which you administer them to others. — Now, Madam, (returned I) you have mentioned the first thing which moves me to persist, with the obstinacy I shall persist, in my request, that you will be in, or near London, that you may be within reach of proper assistance, if you should have any return of ill health. I have another strong reason which regards myself ; I do not receive so much satisfaction in the conversation of any of my friends, as in that of my new ones ; then how can

K

I bear

I bear the thoughts of losing it? Alas, Sir, (replied EUGENIA) I fear it is time we should lose the pleasure of yours; for though it is impossible for me to think ill of a man whose words and actions, whose countenance, and whole behaviour so loudly proclaim his honour, his humanity, and goodness; I have not lived so long out of the world as not to apprehend that the honours you have already done us, will be taken notice of in a manner injurious both to us and you. I answered, that indeed I feared her reflections on the world were but too just; but that she seemed to have little reason to pay any regard to it; and I would take upon me to defend her from any ill effects of its malice; and would even be cautious of exciting envy, the chief source of ill-will; from this consideration partly it was, that I proposed London, if it would agree with her, — and I was inclined to think that in the winter it might be better than the colder, damper air of the

the

D I A L O G U E II. 131

the country — as there I might have the honour of seeing them sometimes, if they would give me leave, without its being taken notice of. — MELINDA bowed, looked up, and sighed, (I doubt not from the swellings of her grateful heart) and EUGENIA replied, that they were beyond expression obliged to me for all that I had done, and proposed to do, to promote their happiness; but it was not necessary they should be so happy; and as Providence had not given them the means of being so, she could not think of receiving them from any other hands. Dear Madam, (returned I) consider what you say.—To Providence only you are obliged for all the good you have ever received, or can receive; but is it for us to prescribe the means it shall take to convey to us its blessings? I was sent to succour you in your greatest distress; and he who before had given me the means, then gave me the will to do it; and was I ordered to stop there? so far from it,

that I look upon myself as your appointed guardian and trustee, and think myself bound to be careful of your interest, and tender of your happiness. — O heavens ! all this must appear against me at the great day, when I must give an account of my stewardship ! What account can I give ? O shame ! O horrible confusion ! what an account I must give ! What shame — what confusion must that be, when even now — to you — my partial friend — I had rather die than expose my cruel treachery — Hold heart, and do not burst, 'till I have performed my penance ! —

AFTER much persuasion, I prevailed at last upon the poor imprudent lady to go to town for a month only, and try whether it would be agreeable to them or not. It was concluded that I should set out before them. In this interval I had time to consider coolly what I had done, and what I had to do ; I had conceived the most violent passion for the
sweet

sweet innocent MELINDA; and the question was in what manner it was to be gratified: she was by nature of a soft, tender, affectionate disposition, formed for love; I had engaged her gratitude and esteem, and I did not doubt of my success in inspiring her with an equal passion: — but what then? — I knew her real purity, her rooted piety too well, not to be certain that there were only three possible ways of gaining the possession of her, — the legal, — forcible, — or fraudulent: my pride and vanity started at the thoughts of the first; the second I never in my life could think of; and the last my honour blushed at: not to mention the struggles of my conscience, which I had long been accustomed to subdue. — Now might I too have had my URANIA; but those haughty idols to whom I sacrificed my youthful innocence, my real happiness, all my first principles of virtue and religion, frowned, and I dared not disobey them. My generosity, my ho-

nour, my past kindnesses, and my love, pleaded on behalf of the innocent victim.

— Now, I was again racked with contending passions; the Dæmon resumed his sway, and instantly I felt the fiery lash. — Had it not been for my vanity, I should at once have reconciled my honour with my love, and married the virtuous amiable MELINDA. — What if I only seem to marry her? That, if it can be rightly managed, will satisfy her as well: she shall live still with her mother; and then the constraints we must submit to, in order to save appearances, will preserve all the ardour of an amour; I shall love her for ever, without fear of the fatal consequences of security and unsought-for opportunity. Here I fixed: — the expedient served to deceive myself; and now all my thoughts were turned upon the execution.

THINK that the ladies are now settled in their new habitation; a small house in the skirts of the town, with one maid-servant

DIALOGUE II. 135

servant and a boy, the utmost I could prevail on them to accept: they live as much, if not more retired, than they did in the country; I am their only companion, and therefore I exert all my powers to be as pleasing to them as possible: I spend several hours there almost every day; I supply them with books of entertainment, and often read to them myself. But, to make a little more variety, and at the same time to facilitate my grand scheme, I soon introduced a new acquaintance. They had given me leave to wait on them to two or three plays, and an opera, scenes entirely new to the charming MELINDA, who shewed a natural taste for every thing which was excellent, and I perceived was extremely delighted with the music; I suppose she had never before heard any that was tolerable; though I afterwards discovered that she had herself the sweetest voice I ever heard, and an ear of exquisite exactness. From hence I took

136 D I A L O G U E II.

my hint. I had a young man in my service who had been a choirister at Oxford; he had sprightly parts, an agreeable voice, and some skill upon the harpsichord. — Poor wretch, where art thou now? Would I could recall thee, not only to thy native country, but to thy native innocence! But it is I that must answer for thy sins! O, SOPHRONIUS, my good friend, would you could meet with him, and reclaim him; he has sense, and therefore may reform; and I believe had no bad nature, 'till my example led him astray: after the sad event I am soon to relate, I could not bear the sight of him, and therefore sent him with a friend abroad, with a promise never to forget him, when he wanted my assistance; I have remember'd him in my Will, that poverty might not tempt him to more wickedness: you will see him upon this account; and would to God your goodness may have the effect, which I doubt not it will aim at, for my sake, as well as his.

— I

DIALOGUE II. 137

— I must remind you, that I was not an useless member of our musical club at Oxford; and when I was abroad, to amuse my melancholy, I practised under some of the best masters. — Now, one day, after I had been at the opera with my two ladies; upon their expressing the pleasure I had procured them, I said, if they would give me leave to introduce a worthy young clergyman of my acquaintance, who played and sung very agreeably, I could accompany him on the violin, and we could give them a little music at home. They gratefully accepted the proposal. Thus was the young man I mentioned clothed in robes little suiting his character, and gave great satisfaction to the unsuspecting ladies, not only by his voice and performance, but by his modest conversation and behaviour.

MORE than two months were now elapsed, and I no longer doubted that my sweet MELINDA's heart was my own,

138 D I A L O G U E II.

when EUGENIA began to mention her return into the country: I seized this opportunity of trying the success of my project. I told her she gave me great pain, by returning to this melancholy subject; but as I feared she was serious, she obliged me abruptly to make one proposal more for preventing our separation, which had indeed been long in my thoughts, but which, for the reasons she would presently perceive, I should not have dared even now to mention, if the dread of a parting, which I could not bear, did not oblige me to hazard every thing to prevent it: that I was now going to put it in their power to make me (even in their own opinions) very much their debtor; but that I blushed to propose the means, as I must at the same time propose terms, which perhaps, after all, might be harder for me to submit to, than themselves. I paused a little, but the attention of my audience was too deeply engaged to suffer them to interrupt me.

EUGENIA'S

DIALOGUE II. 139

EUGENIA'S eyes were fixed upon me, and in them I thought I read suspense, surprize, and hope, mixt with fear; MELINDA'S eyes were fixt upon the ground, but the deep blush that overspread her face, indicated a consciousness that she was particularly interested in the event. — I proceeded — I am of a wealthy powerful family, which is by no means exempt from pride, the usual attendant upon power and riches. Upon my father's death, I inherited a very ample fortune; but my relations have set their hearts upon seeing that fortune still greatly aggrandized: I doubt not but some of them mean to contribute largely to this their own scheme, but it is upon terms I can never submit to: they have more than once already almost irreconcilably quarrelled with me for rejecting grand alliances of their proposing; but I could not resolve to sacrifice my inclinations to my ambition; and I never had seen the lady with whom I thought I could
be

140 D I A L O G U E II.

be happy in marriage, 'till Providence blessed me with the acquaintance of the most amiable MELINDA. — I bowed, and paused again; whilst the sweet creature half lifted up her trembling eyes, and gently inclined her head: the mother still was silent. — Though I could not, (continued I) sacrifice all my peace and happiness to the pride of my family, I could, I think, give up some external circumstances, which are in truth not essentially necessary, rather than shock their vanity, and forfeit all their good will and friendship; and could I flatter myself that you, dearest Madam, (addressing myself to MELINDA) could think my hand and heart, without my state and grandeur, an offer not unworthy of your excellence; and that you, Madam (to EUGENIA) could consent to give me your amiable daughter upon such conditions, I would proceed. — I paused for a reply, but received none for some moments. The lovely innocent trembled
all

D I A L O G U E II. 141

all over; her heart beat violently, and a crimson blush overspread her face and bosom: EUGENIA blushed too; but at length, with glistening eyes, Pardon me, Sir, said she, that my confusion and gratitude have kept me so long silent. I cannot *now* express half the meaning of my heart: your manner leaves me no room to doubt of your seriousness; but I imagine you have not duly considered of what you have been saying; and therefore beg that before another word is added, you will retire, and do yourself that justice; and then I doubt not but you will see that you have mentioned a thing which would be vastly too great an honour for you to offer, or for us to receive. I replied, that I had long before maturely considered it, and should long ago have made the same proposals, but that I was deterred by the shame of offering terms so unworthy the merit, the excellence of the beautiful MELINDA,

which

142 D I A L O G U E II.

which was such as would add lustre to a throne.

BUT not to lengthen a scene, the event of which only is of importance, suffice it to say that the issue was perfectly agreeable to my wishes. When I found that I had EUGENIA's consent, I addressed myself to the blushing, trembling MELINDA, and taking her cold hand in both mine — but the most important question of all, (said I) is still to be determined. — What says the sweet MELINDA, can she love her CALLISTUS? — does she love him? — if she does, I hope she will not be ashamed to own it — If she cannot — There I stopped; and the gentle maid, overcome with confusion, gratitude, and tenderness, let her head drop upon my shoulder; I clasped her in my arms, and pressed her close to my throbbing heart: in this posture we continued silent for some moments, 'till upon her making an effort to disengage herself, — I said, There is a kind consenting in your eyes and

D I A L O G U E II. 143

and manner ; but, if it is so, as I would interpret it, shall I not have the joy of hearing it from your own lips ? With looks alternately lifted up, and dejected, she answered — Indeed, Sir, I know not how to call what I feel for you, or how to distinguish gratitude from love. I have ever felt for my dear mother the fondest affection, the just return of her tenderness ; and my soul is deeply penetrated with a sense of heaven's unmerited goodness ; but such warm and lively gratitude as your unexpected kindnesses to my poor distressed mother and myself excited, I never before experienced : need I say, that my most earnest wish is to be able to make some return to your goodness ? and need I be ashamed to own that the thought of contributing to your happiness is most pleasing to me ? — Dear, delightful simplicity ! sweet unaffected modesty ! — how happy I might have been ! how happy I was ! A whole year I was happy ! — O, misery ! — it is gone !
— The

—The most perfect purity! the most engaging gentleness! — all softness, sweetness, tenderness! — we could have loved one another for ever! — Insufferable torment! had I been innocent like her, we might have met again — Distracting thought! O what a parting! never to meet again! — what a scene! Hell can be no worse! — O, idiot, villain! O selfish miser! She gave thee all she could! had she been mistress of a throne, it had been thine; but thy hard-hearted pride denied her a name! — For which that name is blotted out in Heaven! —

SOPHRONIUS! I had forgot that you was by me; I was absorbed in my wretched self. — O, kind Sir, I must wound your honest heart! give me your hand — I am almost at my journey's end! — nay, now you cannot speak — do not try, for I must go on.

ELEVEN months were elapsed since our marriage — Marriage, did I say? O that we had indeed been married! would all

all the world had been witnesses of the solemnity, that the cursed thought might never have risen in my mind ! —

MELINDA was now in a state which might have been a source of new delights ; but I observed her spirits were dejected ; when one day she took my hand, and kissing it, — Shall I not (said she) my dear CALLISTUS, die your acknowledged wife ? Shall I not have the comfort of leaving a good name behind me ? nay, *your* honourable name to grace my memory ? If I am to live, I could be content to live for ever as I have done since the happy day that united us ; nor feel a wish for greater state or grandeur : your love, my CALLISTUS, is all that is necessary to my happiness, except my good name : let me live in private still, but let me live in credit : my condition must soon be known, and then what will the world say ? if I am not CALLISTUS's wife, then what am I ? O, my love, my lord, my husband, as I have lived with innocence, let me

L

not

146 D I A L O G U E II.

not die with infamy ! If I am now to die, your friends will soon be reconciled to you ; but if I am to *live*, what have you to fear—or what have you more to wish ?

— Well, you know best, but it seems strange to me ! — Were I a Queen —

O that my CALLISTUS had as humble a mind as his MELINDA ! — But you will own me. — Yes, ever, (answered I) as

my dearest, sweetest love ; and I will love you for ever with the same tender passion. But will you not own me

for your wife ? You *are* my love, my mistress, and my wife : Heaven heard our mutual vows, and has recorded them. —

Heaven bless the lips that uttered, and the heart that dictated those charming words ! — and will you say the same in public ? will you tell the world that poor MELINDA is your wife !

— What cruel fiend drove me on to my ruin ! I answered — Alas, my love, such is the folly of the world, that they would not be satisfied with so sacred a union

as

DIALOGUE II. 147

as ours ; the least omission in form, is of more consequence in their absurd opinion, than the want of esteem, mutual affection, and all other essential circumstances of a real union.—What means my CALLISTUS ? what omission do you talk of ? cried the astonished innocent — Now is the time (thought I) to settle every thing upon its proper footing ; the occasion happily presents itself ; but three words more, and all is over ; it is too late to think of parting now ; I will settle upon her a fortune beyond her utmost wishes ; and when she reflects how happy she has been, how fond I am, and that nothing is wanting but an empty name, she will easily be reconciled to her condition ; and therefore thus I answered her : — senseless villain as I was ! — You must know then, my love, that I feared from the prejudices of education, and that so private and confined a one, that you would not have been contented to be happy but in the way of the world ; that

148 D I A L O G U E II.

well as you loved me, you would not have chosen to quit the common road to follow me, though my way led to Elysium; the common way was impracticable to me; must I then stop short in the pursuit of happiness, to which I likewise meant to conduct my MELINDA! It would have been egregious folly to have done so! I therefore sought for a bye-way to that mansion of felicity with which we both seem to be contented: I clothed my own valet-de-chambre in the formal garb, and he, as well as the best of them, repeated to us the old dull story, little suited to the ardent tenderness of a love like mine: and have we not been exquisitely happy? are we not — Full of my cursed self, and wholly intent upon my execrable scheme, I observed not the signs which I suppose must have foreboded the fate that followed — whilst I spoke the last words, both being standing, she fell back so suddenly and violently, that I could not catch her, before
that

that lovely form was dashed against the ground: I found her motionless, and, as it seemed to me, breathless — I cried aloud for help for *her*, and vengeance on myself. — Her mother, first alarmed, found us both on the floor; her daughter, to all appearance, dead, and me on my knees, by her side, sometimes kissing her pale face, — with horror sure in my own, — sometimes beating my own head and breast in distracting agonies of fury and despair. I know not exactly what I said or did in those dreadful moments, but believe I accused myself in terms of shocking desperation, to the wretched mother, as the murderer of her daughter; and in broken sentences, as my passion gave them utterance, disclosed the whole villainous proceeding: this I rather suppose from what followed, than exactly know; for — O heavens! what a condition was I in! Words cannot paint, nor thought conceive the agonizing horrors, the heart-rending passions

150 D I A L O G U E II.

of sorrow, pity, remorse, and despair that I endured, when after a long swoon, she revived only to fall into violent convulsions, which having almost disjointed every limb, and distorted every feature — killed her, SOPHRONIUS ! — O horrid, horrid ideas ! — dreadful ! — shocking ! — distracting thoughts ! — I cannot bear it — oh ! I shall run mad ! — SOPHRONIUS, speak to me — call me off. —

SOPHRONIUS.

O, CALLISTUS — O, Sir —

CALLISTUS.

O no — you will not speak to me, you will not look on me, I knew you would not — Wretch, wretch, miserable wretch ! even SOPHRONIUS has abandoned thee !

SOPHRONIUS.

Sir — Sir — hear me speak —

CALLISTUS.

HOLD, SOPHRONIUS ! do not *you* curse me ! execrable wretch though I am, do
not

DIALOGUE II. 151

not *you* doom me to destruction ! I loved *you*, Sir — whilst I was myself, I loved you as myself ! even now I love you — O SOPHRONIUS, SOPHRONIUS, dearly do I love you ! —

SOPHRONIUS.

STOP, stop, Sir — on my knees, I beg you stop — and do not break my heart !

CALLISTUS.

I AM very foolish, I believe. — rise, dearest friend, or pull me down to you. — I am quite a child in weakness and folly — SOPHRONIUS — I am very faint — my friend — if you would have me live — give me something quick — .

SOPHRONIUS.

HERE, my dear Sir — signify to me by a sign when you are better, but do not speak. —

CALLISTUS.

I AM better. — O, Sir, you would not wonder at these weaknesses, if you knew what passed within ! —

152 D I A L O G U E II.

SOPHRONIUS.

THANK GOD you are better !

CALLISTUS.

O, SOPHRONIUS, pray that my soul may live, if it be possible ; but lose not a thought on this wretched body ; which soon, very soon, must return to its native earth. But, O my soul ! what will become of thee !

SOPHRONIUS.

DEAR Sir, recollect the comfortable assurances you entertained last night ; to which your present sufferings ought justly to add strength.

CALLISTUS.

AND is it so, SOPHRONIUS ? come then, I have more horrors still in store, more sufferings still — grant me but strength to bear !

SOPHRONIUS.

BUT, my dearest friend —

CALLIS-

CALLISTUS.

No, SOPHRONIUS, if my present sufferings can avail in any degree to expiate my past crimes, sure you would not wish to deprive me of a moment's pain. Come, poor EUGENIA, do thou assist to torture me ! This is the only, dreadful service thou owest me : but, perhaps thou canst now forgive the unutterable wrongs I did thee, and pity the wretch who once could pity thee ; how I pitied thee ! even when madness brought thee a horrible relief ; surely I have been distracted too, but, oh ! only so much as to add to my horrors ! to present thy dreadful image to my trembling soul ; in one pale hand, thy bleeding son, and in the other, thy sweet — Oh ! that is too much to feel and live ; I must be taken off that rack !

— Yes, SOPHRONIUS, the poor EUGENIA, whom I released from common calamities, I plunged into such exquisite distress, as her nature could not bear ;
her

154 D I A L O G U E II.

her reason, when it could no longer serve her, kindly forsook her — she died raving mad, in a private hospital to which I had conveyed her.—O that all the world could hear me! O that every heedless youth could feel for an instant, in the midst of his pleasures, what I feel now! —surely, surely, he could sin no more!—

BUT I must hasten to a conclusion. My sand sinks apace, and I think I shall not live beyond this glass.

THERE, SOPHRONIUS, read that, and then throw it into the fire.

SOPHRONIUS

(*reading.*)

‘ SIR, If you have any thing of the
 ‘ gentleman, or the man left, come and
 ‘ give me the only satisfaction that I can
 ‘ receive for the enormous wrongs you
 ‘ have done me : meet me on this day
 ‘ se’nnight at Calais ; and I will either
 ‘ begin your punishment, or you shall
 ‘ add my death to your damnation. My
 ‘ poor

DIALOGUE II. 155

‘ poor mother, my sweet sister, summon
‘ you to judgment. Your conscience
‘ will inform you whom you have made
‘ the most wretched of mankind.’

‘ P. S. My duty confines me at pre-
‘ sent near the place I have named, which
‘ I suppose may be a convenient one to
‘ whichever of us survives.’

CALLISTUS.

O, SOPHRONIUS, such cowards can
guilt make us, that my very soul tremb-
led as I read it. But I could not con-
ceive for some time how the poor young
man became acquainted with his misery,
’till I recollected that two days after the
divine MELINDA quitted the society of
a fiend, for that of angels, I was inform-
ed that their foot-boy had absented him-
self suddenly, and that he had not been
heard of since ; which in my distracted
condition I had never before reflected
on ; but now it appeared that the wretch-
ed

156 D I A L O G U E II.

ed EUGENIA had sent him to summon her son to revenge his sister and herself.

I KNEW not what to do ; I dreaded the thought of adding to my load of guilt ; but more I dreaded death ; and I doubted not but if I refused to meet him, he would pursue me through the world : nor was the fear of shame, amidst so many greater terrors, wanting to increase my tortures. Sometimes I determined to go and present my naked bosom to his revengeful sword, but, oh ! the dread of what was to come after, soon frightened me back to life : life was become a state of unutterable torment, and yet I durst not die.

I SET out with a heart torn with innumerable conflicts ; but resolved, if possible, to avoid being guilty of the death of an innocent, much injured, and most unhappy young gentleman. Alas ! was it to make him any satisfaction for the outrageous wrongs, the base treachery, the inhuman cruelty I had been guilty of
to

to his excellent sister, for the dishonour of his family, and the exquisite sorrows, the irreparable losses I had brought upon him, to give him a chance of depriving me of life at the equal hazard of his own? had he seized me unarmed, and stabbed me in a thousand places, had he tortured me with the most ingenious studied cruelty, the punishment could not have been equal to my crimes, the vengeance had been wholly inadequate to his wrongs.

O, SOPHRONIUS, how was my soul shocked, when my eyes met my MELINDA'S face, only the features strengthened into manly beauty! O, lovely youth, how much rather would I have given thee my heart, my estate, nay, my *life*, than have made the least attempt upon thine; but that the dread of appearing, loaded as I was with guilt and shame, before the almighty, all-seeing Judge, was too horribly strong for every other consideration.

158 D I A L O G U E II.

THE moment I made myself known to him, his eyes lightned with rage, and he bid me name a time and place convenient for our meeting. I was going to express something of what I felt; but he stopped me short, by telling me he would hold no converse with me, but what was necessary for our purpose.

O GREAT GOD, what did I feel when I returned to my room ! It is in vain to endeavour to explain to you the complication of miseries and horrors ! what a night I passed ! not one instant did I close my eyes, 'till the dreadful morn arose : — O, SOPHRONIUS, think what it was ; and all the consequence of my own folly, vanity, and villany ! —

At length we met upon the fatal field ; my impatient foe was there before me : the instant I approached he drew his sword, and prepared to attack me ; I drew not mine, but said, Sir, this is no satisfaction for the calamities I have occasioned, though wholly blind to the
dreadful

dreadful consequences; surely I feel them sharper than yourself! — share with me my estate, or take it all, and I will only share your sorrows.

HARDLY had he patience to hear thus much, when he cried aloud — with fury flashing from his eyes, O, villain, coward, execrable wretch, and wouldst thou bribe my justice! wouldst thou buy off my revenge? Draw, or this instant will I plunge thy trembling soul to hell.

My soul indeed trembled at his impetuous threat, and I durst not open my bosom to his thrust. I defended myself 'till I had disarmed him. Now (cried I) I have something more to offer; I give you your life, a large estate, my utmost services, — my tenderest friendship, would you deign to accept it; live, Sir, and be my brother,

I WAS going to sheath my sword, when he darted suddenly to his, which had fled out of his hand to a considerable distance, and which I had left there, and
4 snatching

snatching it up, he flew to me again, and cried, — my cause admits no points of ceremony; — my wretched mother cries for vengeance, my murdered sister calls for justice, — again defend yourself, or die. — Then rushing furiously towards me, he ran upon my guard, and instantly fell dead at my feet. — I stood some moments stiffened with horror; my soul and my senses were all in confusion; for a moment I knew not where I was, or what I had been doing: a short oblivion gave me the only moment's ease from insufferable anguish, that I had felt for a month; and, oh! the only one I have enjoyed, ever since, 'till my SOPHRONIUS deigned to bring me comfort. — Soon, too soon, did I wake from the short trance, to torment which only a wretch guilty as myself, if there is on earth such another wretch, can have any idea of! — My eyes recovered their faculty to see the son of EUGENIA, the brother of MELINDA, weltring in his blood, pale and

D I A L O G U E II. 161

and breathless at my feet — the loveliest youth that ever those wretched eyes beheld, cut off in his bloom by my murderous hand — I dash'd myself on the ground in an agony of despair — dreadful ideas! — horrible recollections! — unutterable misery! — it is not to be borne! — Pity me, SOPHRONIUS! — indeed I suffer strangely — my heart — my head — are both in agonies — my brain's on fire — my heart's convuls'd — it bursts, it bursts —

SOPHRONIUS:

O CALLISTUS, stop — compose yourself, dear Sir; — alas, you will destroy yourself — say no more at present, Sir, — but let me recollect myself a moment — and I have much to say to you —

CALLISTUS

(*raving.*)

HUSH — are you mad? — what's all this hurry? — for God's sake what's

M

the

162 D I A L O G U E II.

the matter ? — stay — I wanted to say something — but you hurry me so — O, it was only this — You must know that once I killed an Angel — a sweet Angel she was ! — and I murdered a poor mad wretch—but that was in pity—for it was a sad sight — O, most miserable ! — She too was happy once — but she ran mad with sorrow—and so I killed her—Yes, Sir, and these same hands (for all they look so pale now) were bathed in the blood of her foolish boy——He was handsome ; but what of that ? had he not been like his sister, I should not have minded it —— Oh, where is my MELINDA !

SOPHRONIUS.

O HEAVENS, how he raves ! what shall I do ! if I call for help, I expose him, and perhaps it may go off — something like this has passed before. —— How are you, dear Sir ? I hope my dear CALLISTUS feels himself better.

CALLIS-

CALLISTUS.

I DON'T know, Sir — it might have been better — but it is past — what signifies this bustle now? — what would you have! what's done, cannot be undone — so don't look so stern — but pray, who are you, Sir, that you dare to arraign my actions! — Besides, 'tis false, I never killed LUCINDA — she's alive still — Ah! what have I done! LUCINDA! ah poor, poor LUCINDA! I have fixed her on the rack for years! Oh, take her down, and put me in her place! — O pitiful! — my heart bleeds for her! — Hark! — O Heavens! — a hundred voices cry for judgment on me! — it is pronounced — already, I'm in torment — they tear me — O inhuman — I did not intend it — I meant but to be happy — I only sought for pleasure — O inexorable! — cruel dogs — I cannot bear it — they tear me limb from limb —

M 2

SOPHRO-

SOPHRONIUS.

O GRACIOUS God, have mercy on him! — O dreadful — now I *must* call for help — who's there! help — help —

The wretched CALLISTUS, in strong convulsions, was conveyed with difficulty to his bed, where his amazing sufferings soon put an end to his life.

SUCH was the end of a man on whom Providence had bestowed every blessing which can contribute to the felicity of a human creature; all which he wilfully perverted to his destruction, by yielding to the temptations of Vanity and Sensuality.

SOPHRO.



SOPHRONIUS;
OR, THE
COUNTRY GENTLEMAN.
DIALOGUE III.

O præclarum diem, cum ad illud divinum animorum
concilium cætumque profeiscar! cumque ex hac
turba et colluvione discedam!

CICERON. DE SENECT.



100

100

100

100

100

100

100

100

100

100

100



DIALOGUE III.

SOPHRONIUS. URANIA.

Their SONS and DAUGHTER.

INTRODUCTION.

SOPHRONIUS, (with whom the Reader is already acquainted) after he had performed the last sad duties to his departed friend, the wretched CALLISTUS, and, as executor, settled his affairs, returned with impatience to his rural retirement, the seat of peace, of love, and chearfulness.

M 4.

THOUGH

168 D I A L O G U E III.

THOUGH his mind was depressed with sadness, when first he left that shocking scene of horrors, which memory perpetually represented to his fancy ; yet in proportion as he advanced on his way, and approached his own delightful home, new ideas flowed in apace ; and URANIA, the admirable URANIA, his lovely children, his elegant garden, and a thousand other sweet domestic circumstances, filled his imagination. What pleasing sensations did he experience, when he arrived at the village ! None but those who can at least conceive such excellence as his, can imagine the effects of it : the honest farmers and countrymen lining the way, with countenances animated with joy and respect, gave him a sincere welcome ; the women blessed him as he passed, with tears of affectionate pleasure in their eyes : heart-felt satisfaction, gratitude, and benevolence, glowed in the benign countenance of SOPHRONIUS. — But who shall express his delightful

DIALOGUE III. 169

lightful emotions when he entered his own gates! — feel them, you who can; — happy who *can* feel them, though bought with many a sigh!

SOPHRONIUS acquired this extraordinary regard from his neighbours, not only by his personal merits, and amiable qualities, but by the important benefits he procured to the country round him. He introduced considerable improvements in agriculture: by a scheme of his, the river was made navigable thro' all his estate: he set up manufactures: instituted a kind of charity-school in his own house; where, under his own eye, and by his immediate direction, the children of his tenants were taught all that could be useful for them to know: in fine, by præmiums, and encouragements of every kind, he raised such a spirit of industry and ingenuity around him, that the village where he lived, grew to a little town; the value of his estate was immensely increased; and he became

rich

170 DIALOGUE III.

rich without any profession, or apparent business. Such was his reputation for wisdom, integrity, and love of his country, that he was chosen member of parliament for a neighbouring borough, without the least application on his part; and even contrary to his inclinations: however, he would not appear regardless of the honour done him by his countrymen, nor averse to the trouble of serving them in their own way. After having sat one parliament, and declared his disinclination to being re-elected, his eldest son was accepted in his stead.

URANIA was no less respected and beloved: she too was a great benefactor to the neighbourhood, by her example, her charity, her tenderness to the poor in sickness, but particularly by her attention to the education of the female youth. She was too grateful for the eminent advantages she had derived from the care and pains of her excellent father,

DIALOGUE III. 171

father, not to be desirous of communicating the same benefits to others.

SOPHRONIUS and URANIA had the strongest proofs of the important effects of a skilful education in their own family. Four sons, and one daughter, remained to them, at the sad æra I am going to mark.

SEBASTIAN, the eldest son, had been some years in parliament; the second, was already in business at the Bar; THEOPHILUS was in orders, and had a living near SOPHRONIUS; LIONEL, the fourth son, was in the army, and then happened to be quartered in the neighbourhood: the beautiful EMILIA, the only remaining daughter, had been the constant companion, and prime delight of her happy father and mother, for fifteen years. And now, SOPHRONIUS, after having many years enjoyed almost uninterrupted health, with easy circumstances, by his own skill and prudence continually becoming more affluent; the society of a most amiable woman,

172 D I A L O G U E III.

woman, in all respects qualified to be the companion and friend of a man of sense and virtue ; the dutiful affection of a race of children, who were an honour to their parents, their country, and their species ; the highest esteem and love of many valuable persons, and the respect and regard of all who knew him ; — in short, all the real blessings which make life desirable, was seized with a violent fever : the inflammation soon settled on his bowels, and, for the first time, he now suffered exquisite bodily pain for two days, and a night.

It chanced that all his children were around him, except the second son ; and never was a scene of more distress.

URANIA, though she generally had resolution enough to restrain her grief, and conceal her own sufferings, that she might not add to his, was sometimes obliged to quit the room, and yield to the most heart-rending agonies of sorrow : the gentle EMILIA, all softness and tenderness,

DIALOGUE III 173

tenderness, sunk under the complication of misery from the sight of her father's and mother's tortures, and the desolation of all the family; for the very servants seemed to apprehend the loss of an affectionate parent.

IN the midst of this distress, SOPHRONIUS, who had long remained in silent suffering, called his wife and children around him, and declared himself perfectly easy.

WITH what affecting transports did this news inspire them! scarce could they support the sudden transition from the most anxious grief, to the liveliest joy. After they had all given vent to their full hearts by various expressions of fond delight, affection, and pious gratitude, SOPHRONIUS intimated that he hoped to get some rest; and recommended it to all to seek refreshment, after their great fatigue of spirits.

SOPHRONIUS alone was not deceived by the flattering change; he was himself

174 D I A L O G U E III.

self persuaded it was owing to a mortification ; but as he was not certain, he would not give an unnecessary alarm : and besides, he thought it best, however it might prove, that all might have an opportunity of enjoying some rest, before the last sad scene was opened. As to himself, his strength and spirits being quite exhausted by pain, he soon fell into a deep sleep. When he awaked in the morning, after many hours of sweet repose, he found his physician by his bed's side, and all the family around him, in silent suspense : the Doctor had already damped their joy, by the little satisfaction he expressed at the account they gave him.

SOPHRONIUS still lay quiet for a few minutes, meditating in what manner he might best act the small remainder of his part. At length having formed his plan, after greeting them all with a serene, but solemn air, he called the physician to him, and gave him a particular ac-

D I A L O G U E. III. 175

count of the strange alteration that had happened ; and conjured him to tell him plainly, whether his suspicions were not well founded, that this flattering appearance was owing to a fatal cause, and that a mortification was proceeding. The good Doctor paused a moment, sighed, looked round on URANIA and her amiable family, who stood all fixt in cruel suspense, and pressing SOPHRONIUS's hand, said, — My dear Sir, to you, I could calmly communicate news that—must give you joy ;—but oh ! how shall I make known to this poor Lady, and this unhappy circle, that SOPHRONIUS will shortly be taken from them.

SOPHRONIUS calmly replied,—I return you a thousand thanks, good Sir, for your sincerity, for your humanity, your assiduity, and care of me, and my family, on this, and many other occasions : I wish you all the prosperity this world can afford, and a happy change for a better ;

176 D I A L O G U E III.

better; and so, my dear Sir, most heartily farewell.

THE Doctor, with a profound sigh, kissed his patient's hand, and retired.

TEARS now gushed from every eye with redoubled violence: the wretched URANIA could no longer suppress the tempestuous sobs, which would otherwise have burst her labouring heart: she threw herself on her knees at the side of the bed, and pressing her face upon SOPHRONIUS's hand, groaned in bitterness of spirit.

SOPHRONIUS now feeling the equanimity he hoped to have preserved, beginning to forsake him, endeavoured to interrupt the solemn scene.

SOPHRONIUS.

My dearest URANIA, in pity to yourself, — in pity to me, endeavour to recollect yourself: I know how hard a task I would impose, but I know likewise your magnanimity; I have observed, with
the

DIALOGUE III. 177

the highest admiration and gratitude, the effects of it, during my illness ; never was there a fitter occasion for its exertion. I wish to end my life with more composure than I now feel ; — I wish to spend the small remainder of it, in some manner that might be of use to my family ; — but, this affecting scene overpowers my resolution, and confounds my intellects.

URANIA.

FORGIVE me, my SOPHRONIUS — oh, pardon my weakness — I will — if I can — be composed ; but, oh ! how is it possible ! — I am overwhelmed with despair — I have no hope left !

SOPHRONIUS.

WHAT says my dearest life ? — has URANIA no hope left ? — Alas ! I see you cannot yet recollect yourself : indeed 'tis hard — 'tis a strong combat with nature ! even I, with heaven within

N

my

178: D I A L O G U E III.

my view — even I, who have an humble confidence, that in a few hours I shall bid adieu to pain and misery for ever — Even now I suffer more than I have yet suffered.

URANIA.

O MY life — my beloved SOPHRONUS — and do I increase your sufferings! shall I make your last moments bitter! — I will — I will overcome this selfish weakness!

SOPHRONUS.

O NOBLE URANIA, God will assist you. — Consider, my dear love, there is no reason to lament for me; my body is now easy; and my soul is going to be delivered out of prison: consider that it cannot be long before yours will be freed from its painful confinement. In a few moments I shall, I trust, — through the boundless beneficence of my Creator, and the redemption of my Saviour, — enter upon a glorious eternity of happiness:

DIALOGUE III. 179

ness: and in a few short days, or years — and what are years, whilst we contemplate eternity — What are ages but moments! — in a few short moments then, you too, my URANIA, shall join me in the blessed regions.

URANIA.

'Tis true, — 'tis true! — Shall I grieve that my SOPHRONIUS is going to enjoy the reward of all his virtues! — O no! I feel my soul expand with the great thought! — Come, my children, approach, and view your father, who is going to be exalted to the glorious station of an angel.

SOPHRONIUS.

God bless you all, my dear children, and comfort you! nay, — do not weep thus bitterly: — look up to your excellent mother; learn to imitate, not only her tender affection, but her constancy in suffering: that celestial view which

180 D I A L O G U E III.

now brightens her countenance, should animate you all: My EMILY, — dry up your tears, my own sweet girl. — Will you not take comfort from your mother's example?—will you not rejoice with her, that your father is going to be happier, than even *she*, and *you*, and the rest of my good children could make him? — If it please God to enable you to preserve your innocence, you will not think death terrible, do you think you shall!

EMILIA.

O MY father — might it but please heaven that I should even now accompany you — I should be blest indeed!

SOPHRONIUS.

Ay, so indeed you would: but will not my good girl be content to receive God's blessings, and free bounties, in his own manner, and at his own time? Will you not be ready to do his will, from whom you expect so glorious a reward?

DIALOGUE III. 181

— And you, my sons, let me not see you grieve as men without hope. My SEBASTIAN has already half run the race that I have now finished — how short a space will the remainder seem, when you have passed over it ! the path before you appears smooth and pleasant ; think only of performing your course with alacrity.

WITH what confidence can you, my good THEOPHILUS, preach patience and submission to your flock, if you do not shew that you are capable of exerting them, on trial, yourself ?

It is not the contemplation of death simply, that shocks my dear LIONEL ; he of all men should be most familiar to the thoughts of it.

I MEAN not to reproach you all for your tenderness on this occasion ; I should have been grieved not to have seen you moved : I mean only to rouse your dejected spirits, and remind your reason to gather up the reins.

162 DIALOGUE III.

URANIA.

WE obey you—See, we dry our tears
—Gracious God, support my resolution!

EMILIA.

DEAREST Sir — I would — but cannot — cannot — Dear Madam — forgive me —

URANIA.

ALAS, my child! — I am — as weak
as you —

SOPHRONIUS.

COME, my own URANIA, and my dear good children, let me endeavour to divert your thoughts from the poor dying mortal, to the rational Being that will live for ever: let me claim your attention for a few minutes, and fix it on my immortal mind; — that is on *myself*; — for this worthless *body* will shortly have no more relation to *me*, than the bed I lie on: — but methinks I shall still be related

D I A L O G U E III. 183

related to *you* : — I can hardly conceive that the bonds which tye me to you can ever be dissolved. — Methinks it would add to my happiness in heaven, to be able to assist you here in your progress thro' life : but whether I shall have that indulgence or no, is not of importance, since God himself is your guide, and protector : — he is omni-present, and all-sufficient : — he wants not the assistance of ministerial agents, though perhaps he may employ them, as an exercise of their virtue, and a great ingredient of their happiness. — O how my soul exults, in the thought of having the sphere of my beneficence for ever enlarged ; — in being one of the honoured delegates of the Almighty to communicate happiness to my fellow-creatures : — perhaps, as my own station rises from one degree of perfection to another, to be permitted to pass from world to world, through the boundless regions of space ; to observe, and understand the texture, contrivance, and

184 D I A L O G U E III.

furniture of the different planets of innumerable systems; and how an infinite diversity of circumstances may be accommodated by omnipotent wisdom to the uses of intelligent agents; and to see, to know, to admire and adore the infinite power and goodness, in the various moral tracks by which the creatures are conducted to their final felicity.—

BUT it is time to descend from these heights, and attend to the business I have still to do, in this narrow sphere.

URANIA.

AH me! the charm is broke which suspended my sad feelings—I wake again to——

SOPHRONIUS.

GIVE me your attention, dear delights of my life, whilst I address a few words to each, which possibly may be of some use, when I have left you.

URANIA.

DIALOGUE III. 185

URANIA.

Oh dreadful sounds! — but — we attend.

SOPHRONIUS.

I ONLY beg leave to remind you, my excellent URANIA, that you ought not to yield to an extravagant regret, that you are left behind me in this imperfect state, — I know, on recollection, you will feel yourself ready and desirous to accomplish the whole will of our most gracious creator; and to submit, with cheerful obedience, to the remainder of the duties he has thought proper to exact from you: — And when you consider of what important use you may be to our dear children, — especially my EMILY; — to your adopted children in the parish; — to your poor neighbours; — nay to *all* your neighbours; — to a circle, the extent of which you can hardly conceive, that may be influenced by the example of your life, you will even wish to have the time of this ministration prolonged: — suppose
it

186 D I A L O G U E : III.

it of the utmost length it can naturally be, — what is the space,

When cut from out Eternity's vast round?

It is a mere nothing : — and who could with reluctance offer this mite, in gratitude for the inestimable benefits promised by our most gracious master, to those who love him ; and are zealous to serve him in his own prescribed way ? — What can appear insufferable to you, my URANIA, who know that in a little time you will be eased of every burthen, and totally exempted from pain and sorrow, — those badges of human weakness and imperfection, — for ever, and ever : — that yet a little while, and you will be permitted to follow your faithful SOPHONIUS to the mansions of eternal felicity.

URANIA.

AMEN ! — O merciful God — Amen !

SOPHRO-

DIALOGUE III. 187

SOPHRONIUS

(addressing himself to the eldest son.)

AND now what have I to say to my dearest son? will he pardon me if I still pretend to teach him, who is at least as able to instruct me? but the words of dying men are supposed to be worth attention, because the mind must then be more free from prejudice, and every secret human bias, than ever it was before.

SEBASTIAN.

SURE never was so candid, so right a mind, as that of my dear father! — the more bitter is my loss — of such a friend!

SOPHRONIUS.

THINK me not lost, my son; — think me only retired at a little distance from you: — how small the distance may be, God only knows!

SEBASTIAN.

His holy will be done!

SOPHRO-

SOPHRONIUS.

UPON reviewing my own life, I find it has been such as the men of business would call idle; and yet I do not think I have much to reproach myself with in that respect. I believe your turn of mind, my son, and your natural inclinations, are not unlike my own; and therefore what I speak of myself, may be applicable to you.

WHEN *my* father went the way which yours is now ready to go, I quitted the profession of the law, into which he had introduced me, because I perceived in myself neither inclination nor genius for it; and I found it was not necessary to me, as my fortune was then enough to satisfy all wants but those of pride and vanity;—which are never to be satisfied:—and therefore I thought it would be unreasonable in itself, and unjust to others who had their fortunes to make, for me to enter the lists of industry, where the
rewards

DIALOGUE III. 189

rewards of labour would be necessary to them, but superfluous to me : this reasoning is still stronger when applied to you, who will be more amply provided for.

BUT what then was to be *my* part in life ? was I like a mute to serve only to fill the scene ? — or was I to be not only useless, but even troublesome on the stage ? — I own I had no such mean opinion of my station. I conceived that mankind was endowed with an infinite variety of propensities and talents, to serve the different ends of society ; and that a virtuous man could not fail of being a useful member of it. I saw many ways in which I might contribute to the public weal ; but in the course of my life, a thousand opportunities have offered of serving my fellow-creatures, which I could not then foresee ; my duty was, not to neglect these opportunities, but even studiously to seek them ; to employ the extraordinary leisure I enjoyed,
in

190 D I A L O G U E III.

in furnishing myself with useful knowledge, which might be beneficially communicated to, or applied for the service of those who could not, themselves, attain it: as a steward of the great household, to be ready to disburse some of the property in my hands, on all necessary occasions: in fine, — to assist, instruct, improve, and even reprove, all who should stand in need of it: — to be a father to the fatherless; — and if I could not plead the cause, — at least, to stand the friend of the widow; and all who were destitute of their natural protectors: ——— to use the influence, and power, which independent affluence must in some measure acquire, in the encouragement of honest industry; and the discountenancing idleness, and every kind of vice. I need not enter into a minute detail; you will easily recollect many incidents of my life which may become useful hints for your future conduct.

DI A L O G U E. III. 191

SEBASTIAN.

O THAT I may be enabled to follow the admirable example of my honoured father !

SOPHRONIUS.

I DOUBT not you will improve upon my plan of living. You have already passed the most dangerous season of life; and with the foundation of principles, good sense, and experience which is now settled in your mind, together with the advantage of your excellent mother's advice, — an advantage, you know how to value, — I doubt not you will exceed my fondest hopes.

BUT, when it pleased God to bless me with the society of my dearest URANIA, and with a race of well-disposed children, a new, most important, and pleasing occupation was offered to me ; and I resolved to give it the attention it deserved.

How many careful hours have your dear mother and I spent in planning the properest

192 D I A L O G U E III.

properest methods for your several educations ! — for every child, in some circumstances at least, requires a diversity of management. We observed and commented on every little action and look of your earliest infancy ; and by that minute attention, were enabled to form conjectures of your future characters, which we have found but little occasion to correct. It is surprizing how early, and how strongly, the character of the temper is marked ; the nicest regulation of which, is of the utmost importance, both to the happiness of the individual, and a multitude of people who may have connections with him. How many persons of excellent principles in general, and many admirable qualities, become insupportable to their families, — that is to those on whom they must depend for the principal comforts of life, — by the neglect of their parents, and teachers, first, and their own inattention afterwards, to this
essential

DIALOGUE III. 193

essential article of moral conduct, and human happiness.

I AM persuaded that infancy is the properest, if not the only time, for rigid chastisement, where there is any thing generous in the disposition of the pupil : hard words and blows are wretched expedients by which to govern reasonable creatures ; but they are necessary and effectual methods of establishing command upon irrational minds. I suppose you can none of you remember any instances of corporal punishment from me ; and yet such you have had ; some of you with great severity : nor could you now acknowledge yourselves, in the true representations I could make, of your original tempers and characters.

THAT which is the duty of parents and tutors to the infant, becomes his own duty, the grand business of his life, when he is ripened into a rational creature : it is the task assigned him in this probationary state, to cultivate the noble
O faculties,

faculties, and virtuous dispositions, with which his nature is endowed ; and to resist those propensities which rebel against reason : the last is our state of warfare ; and, in this respect, we are compared to soldiers in an enemy's country, who must be continually on their guard, and ready to snatch up their arms on the least alarm : the other may be likened to the works of peace, not less necessary, and only less *violently* laborious.

UPON observing the early fruits of a careful management of my own children, I reflected how great a benefit it would be to my poor neighbours, to assist them in the education of their's : the time and attention of the labouring part of mankind are too much engaged in providing for the necessities of the body, to be able to do much towards the cultivation of the mind : I therefore thought of a scheme, which I imagined would prove a most useful charity, and at the same time be fruitful of many real advantages.

to

D I A L O G U E III. 195

to myself. — It appeared to me that a private education, under the parents eye, — with certain circumstances, which however can but rarely concur, — was preferable to public schools: an affluent fortune, some abilities, and great attention in the parents; and such a number of pupils, either *in* the family, or collected to it, as may produce the very useful effects of emulation, are essentially necessary: I flattered myself with some prospect of success, in all these particulars; and I thank God I have not been disappointed.

I SPARED no time or pains in seeking for a proper tutor; and, as far as my circumstances could admit, I proportioned his rewards to the services I expected from him: I made him my companion and friend; and the respect with which I treated him, inspired every one else with a still greater degree of it. I then invited some of my poor tenants to partake of the advantages I expected

196 D I A L O G U E III.

from my plan ; and I dedicated a room in my own house to this purpose ; where you may remember to have sometimes seen fifteen or twenty of your little innocent neighbours ; who in that room, you know, were exactly upon the same footing with yourselves. The learned languages would have been of no service to my little farmers, and therefore at the hours set apart for that study, they were employed at home in their rural occupations ; but writing, reading, arithmetic, some knowledge in mechanics, and physics, could not fail of being useful to them ; and these served to open their minds, and free them from the old narrow prejudices, which have been so great an obstruction to all sorts of improvement : this was one main intention of my original scheme, and has, alone, amply secured to this charity its own reward ; for my neighbours have for many years had great reason to envy me my tenants ; who have
readily

readily entered into all my experiments in husbandry, because they understood my meaning ; could themselves discern the probability of the effects I expected from them ; and could dextrously apply their hands, and their instruments, to any new purpose ; and therefore were as little inclined to despair of the event, as to despise the attempt. Every instance of extraordinary ingenuity, or diligence, has been always sure of meeting with a reward ; this excites their emulation, enlivens their labours, conciliates their affections, and returns back to myself with great increase.

You know that I am Lord Chief Justice, or rather Lord Chancellor, throughout all my estate ; by which means I have it in my power to save my tenants from many expences, to compose their animosities, remove their jealousies, and promote their friendships : here every one is ready to assist his neighbour in distress ; self-love, envy, and malice, are less pre-

198 D I A L O G U E III.

valent in this parish, than in many other places, because religion and morality are better understood ; for the first of all the duties of your preceptor, was to teach you religion as rationally as possible ; to explain the foundation, connection, and use of morality ; and in what manner virtue conduces to happiness ; to recommend to your affections, as well as your understandings, that first of all virtues, christian charity, or social love ; the very bond of peace, the very essence of human happiness.

WHAT I did for the male, your good mother did for the female part of the neighbourhood ; we have ever gone hand in hand in virtue, and been a mutual support and assistance to each other : happy is the man who gets one of her pupils for a wife ! the advantage is well known in the country, and neither beauty nor fortune are so great a recommendation.

THUS,

DIALOGUE III. 199

Thus, by conferring real, great, and lasting benefits, at no great expence, and, I may say, with no trouble, — for the time and pains they have cost us, ought rather to be considered as dedicated to amusement, and pleasure, — we have procured infinite good will, the richest of all payments: our tenants and our neighbours are our guards, and our friends; they heartily wish to promote our interests, because they feel their own connected with them; — so far from envying, they rejoice in our prosperity, because they know they shall be partakers of it.

Thus, my sons, I have endeavoured to give you a general view of my principles and practice; and is it not a pleasing prospect?

SEBASTIAN.

Oh, Sir, most delightful! and all of your own making.

O 4

SOPHRO-

200 D I A L O G U E III.

SOPHRONIUS.

SUCH a one you may all of you in some degree raise round you : you, my SEBASTIAN, I doubt not will enrich the present scene ; your father will not be missed in the country ; even his memory will soon be lost in the attention and consideration you will attract.

SEBASTIAN.

IF any sort of excellence shall be observed in me, it will serve only to remind the world of my admirable father, to whom, under God, I owe my all.

SOPHRONIUS.

MY THEOPHILUS too, will have the noblest opportunities of doing good, and gaining love : a worthy clergyman is the greatest blessing to a parish ; the benefits he may confer are infinite ; and the children's children of the present generation may have reason to bless his memory.

Does

DIALOGUE III. 201

Does not *this* prospect charm you? —
does it not warm you?

THEOPHILUS.

INDEED, dear Sir, it does ; and will,
I hope, inspire me with a zeal that may
in some measure supply what is wanting
in my abilities.

SOPHRONIUS.

Yes, you will scorn to content your-
self with barely escaping censure; with
coldly performing the unavoidable parts
of your function, like a poor mechanic
for a paltry hire ; — you will, I trust, be
warm, active, and vigilant in the dis-
charge of your duty : the other profes-
sions envy, though at the same time they
reproach yours, for its idleness ; — if the
business of it were thoroughly performed,
they would have little reason for either :
the man who seriously considers he has
so many immortal souls — a precious,
tremendous charge — to preserve from

202 DIALOGUE III.

misery, and conduct to eternal felicity; will not find himself exempt from much anxiety and labour; he will meet with continual trials of his humanity, his humility, his equanimity, and fortitude, and every christian virtue; will see that it behoves him, above all men, to be perpetually on his guard; to be attentive to every word and action; lest he give offence, lessen the respect that is due and necessary to his character; induce reflections on the whole body of the ministry, and hurt the cause of virtue and religion. Nor will this superior excellence want the encouragement of superior rewards; for, the respect, esteem, and affection of their fellow-creatures, constitute a great part of the felicity of reasonable beings; and I have always observed that a clergyman with good sense, good nature, competent knowledge, uniform morality, and sincere regard for his religion, received more of these from all sorts of people, than any other gentleman

D I A L O G U E. III. 403

man with the same circumstances. But tho' the ministry, from the nature of its functions, and the probable superiority in knowledge and virtue, of its members collectively, is the first of all the professions, let not my son harbour so illiberal a thought, as to despise or ridicule the rest; they are all useful and necessary to society; can all boast of men who are the glory of their species; and must all suffer the disgrace of some unworthy members. Your brother, my only absent child, will, I doubt not, deserve and enjoy the respect of all men, by the rectitude of his conduct, and, very probably, he may one day claim it by the dignity of his station; for merit has nowhere a fairer chance for rising into eminence, than in the law. Our religion is the gracious gift of God, but the law is the noblest work of man; and no profession affords a larger sphere for beneficence than this. How many individuals, how many whole families, receive
the

the most extensive benefits from the able and the honest lawyer ! How greatly is the community served by the learned and the upright Judge ! Let not abuses be objected to the wisdom of institutions ; defects must necessarily appear, and abuses arise in every work of such imperfect creatures as men : but let us always judge candidly and charitably, not only of individuals, but of collective bodies of men, weighing every circumstance, motive, and temptation, and we shall not be so prompt to censure and condemn. My poor boy here will be confounded, by the hasty and malignant, with the many triflers that surround him ; but I think he will, in time, distinguish himself greatly from his giddy companions ; and the merit of a soldier, though it is not so constantly conspicuous, yet when great occasions call it forth, is perhaps of all other the most universally acknowledged, and the most strenuously applauded. And who is more amiable than
the

the modest, rational, moral soldier? Whatever may be the vices incident to the profession, good humour, good breeding, openness of heart, and generosity of mind are its characteristic virtues. A soldier can hardly avoid being, by habit, obedient to governors, respectful to superiors, easy, frank, and friendly to equals, attentive and considerate to inferiors, though firm and inexorable in the exaction of their respective duties: — would they all, like you, my son, employ the great leisure they enjoy, in acquiring such a share of ingenuous learning as every gentleman ought to possess, and particularly all branches of knowledge peculiarly necessary to their proper business — would they be convinced that religion is an essential part of the business of every rational creature, — in short, — would they endeavour to be wise, as well as gallant men, — to be good christians, as well as loyal subjects, how deservedly would they be respected
by

206 DIALOGUE III.

by all mankind! — But alas, my EMILY! it is necessary to inform you, that you must not judge of officers in general, by your brother; since it is too often seen, that the men who most value themselves upon their dignity as gentlemen, who, above all men, affect the character of *men of honour*, hold it not *dishonourable* to betray the innocent, to *dishonour* the person they profess to love, to introduce misery and infamy into worthy families, frequently the families of their friends, and benefactors; — to violate all the laws of generosity, hospitality, fidelity, and even common honesty, when they interfere with the gratification of their brutal passions; — or what is still more infamous, their vanity.

O MY LIONEL — how do these things appear to you now? — now, be assured, they appear to you truly. — May the recollection of this awful scene, — may the words of your dying father, — may

DIALOGUE III. 207

the present reflections, and convictions of your own mind, rush upon it again, in the dangerous hour of jollity and inconsideration: — When the example of the weak and wicked, the sophistry of vice, the fervor of youth, the complaisance of society, and the licentiousness of gaiety, shall all conspire to represent the rigid rules of virtue as unnatural, and unjust, the impositions of men, and the tyranny of priests, then — then, may this solemn scene rush again upon your mind, and damp the rising flame before it grows too strong for opposition! — For when once this method of reasoning is tolerated, the gates are soon thrown open, and every species of intemperance, and immorality, pours in like a torrent; — regularity is then ridiculed, decency affronted, property invaded, and the civil polity insulted! — all which must surely be avenged! — and the dissipated fortune, the distempered body, and the tormented conscience, will prove experimentally

208 DIALOGUE III.

mentally—too late! will prove—that the laws of virtue are the regimens of health, the regulations of prudence, and the requisites of happiness.

AND oh, my EMILY! be sure remember—that it is impossible for a virtuous woman to be happy in the society of a vicious man: fire and water may as soon agree, as a modest and religious mind unite itself, with ease and satisfaction, to one that is debauched and unprincipled. Thou, my sweet girl, art all purity and innocence, and if it please God to grant the assistance of thy excellent mother for a few years longer, to watch over the inadvertence of youth, and restrain the excess of even virtuous affections, thou wilt ever avoid the approaches of impurity: remember she is your first and best friend, therefore let her ever be the confidant of all the secrets of your heart: let not a false shame hinder you from opening your bosom to her; but when ever you feel to disclose your distress,

distress, conclude it the more absolutely necessary to be done ; and be assured you will afterwards find reason to rejoice that you did it.

Love is the rock by which my poor girl will be liable to the greatest dangers ; it is a passion which perhaps is most incident to the most amiable minds ; but, though implanted in our nature for important ends, to which it conducts us by delightful means, like all other passions, if not subjected to the controul of reason, it may lead into the most distressful situations, and be the occasion of the severest sufferings.

I know that my EMILY has a heart formed for love, and every other virtuous affection ; and true love is productive of the most generous sentiments ; it refines, and ennobles the human mind, enriches, and exalts that most coelestial of all its virtues, benevolence ; — it is the most delightful circumstance of human nature ; — the balm of life ; — and

210 D I A L O G U E III.

the sweetest consolation in every distress : Think not I would fright my EMILIA from it ; — no, I would conduct her safely to it. God grant that she may meet with a man whose heart is worthy to be united with hers ! — why sobs my child ? — why do I ask, when I think I know the complication of tender feelings that distress her heart ! — my own URANIA too ! — Alas ! the same worthy sentiments now swell her bosom ; with the additional, bitter reflection on that blissful union which is now going to be dissolved ; — bitter indeed it is, even to me, who believe that I shall quit that happy state which my soul has ever acknowledged with unutterable gratitude, for another still more happy ! — Surely we shall meet again — never more to endure this suffering — surely we shall shortly meet again, to contribute to each other's felicity, in an uninterrupted society, through all eternity ! — let me break off with that reflection. — I feel myself exhausted,

DIALOGUE III, 211

and must still submit to the imperfection of my mortal part.

LEAVE me, my URANIA, my dearest children — we shall meet again, even in this world ; — but it must be to part ; — and let us endeavour to compose our minds, that we may part with the decency, and dignity of immortal beings, who separate only for a short time, in humble confidence of meeting again in the mansions of eternal happiness.

SOPHRONIUS now dismissed his desolate family, but in about an hour summoned them again around him.

TRÉMBLING, they approached him, when they observed an animation in his eyes, and pleasure expressed so strongly in every line of his countenance, that their hearts revived ; they could not help flattering themselves, that some happy change had restored to them the tenderest husband, the fondest father, the gentlest

212 D I A L O G U E III.

and the wisest friend that ever family was blest with; when he said,

FAREWEL, my best beloved all — I am going — let me not say to die; — I am going to begin to live: it is not presumptuous in me to say so; my God, my most beneficent Creator has vouchsafed to give me an undoubting consciousness that I am going to be most happy — I *am* most happy! — I no longer feel that I am about to leave you, no more than I did when I used to wish you a good night, and beg a blessing on you. — Hours, days, months, and years are done away in my mind — I have entered on eternity — I can never want time again, and there is no time in which I shall not be happy. O my URANIA — O my children, we are all equals now — Husband and father are human relations — we shall be all equal friends: — eternal friendship — undoubting esteem — cordial kindness — cœlestial love — Oh, glorious! — Come, my dearest

5

friends

DIALOGUE III. 213

friends — oh hasten to join me — lose not a thought on any other object — pursue your way earnestly, and steadily, and you will soon arrive happily to the end of your journey; — to the end of all your labours, — to the beginning of life — to the blest society of immortal spirits. — Farewel ! — Praise God ! — O praise the divine Essence of goodness ! — I come — my father, and my God —

He said no more ; but with eyes raised towards Heaven, a glow upon his cheeks, and a lively alacrity in every feature, his blessed soul flew out to its Creator.

F I N I S.



